STUDIES IN INDIAN PAINTING

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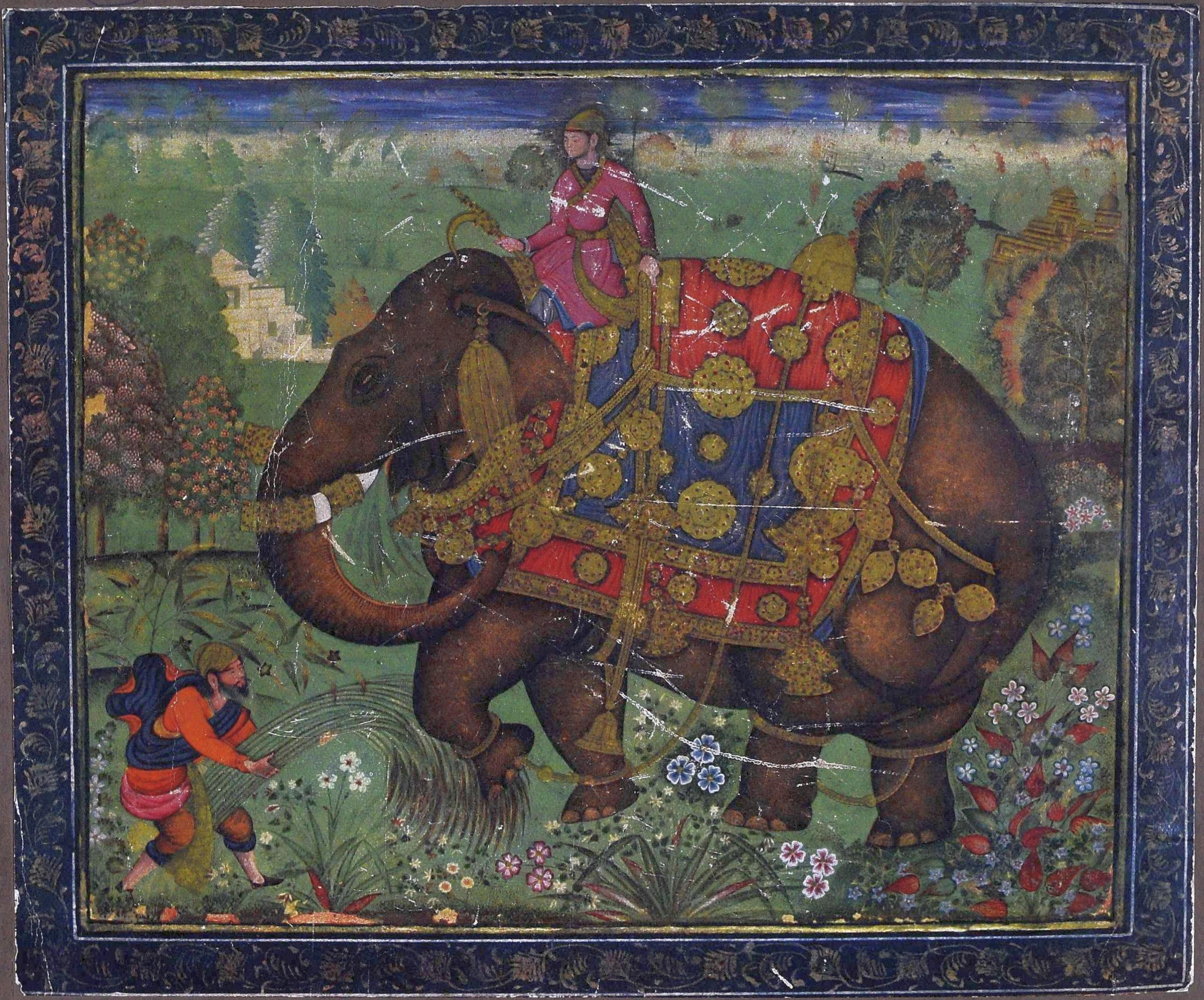

BY

NĀNĀLĀL CHAMANLĀL MEHTA

159

STUDIES IN
INDIAN PAINTING

A SURVEY OF SOME NEW MATERIAL RANGING FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE VII TH CENTURY TO CIRCA 1870 A.D.

By

NĀNĀLĀL CHAMANLĀL MEHTA,
INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

WITH 17 PLATES IN COLOUR AND 44 HALF TONE PLATES

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TO

MY MOTHER

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Note.—I am indebted for permission to reproduce pictures Nos. 27, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46 & 47 to Babu Sitaram Sahu of Benares ; to Bharat Kalā Parishad for Nos. 35, 37, 43, 44, 55, 56, 57, 58 & 61 and to Rai Bahadur Radha Krishna Jalan for Nos. 32, 52, 53, 54 & 60. The help of other friends has been acknowledged elsewhere.

Measurements of original pictures given above are in inches.

FOREWORD

THE object of the present volume is to bring together some new material for the study of Indian painting. Most of the illustrations are published here for the first time and I owe it to my publishers that such a large number of them are in colour. I do not know of any similar work which contains so many coloured reproductions as the present volume and the credit therefor must be given to Messrs. Taraporevala & Sons who have spared no pains and no expense to bring out the book in the best possible style.

I have been fortunate to have been able to include in the present work fresh examples of the classic age of India's pictorial art in the shape of the frescoes of Sittannavāsal, which are the only remnants of Pallava painting of the time of Mahendravarman I; who bore among others the epithet of Chitrakār-puli—literally, the tiger among painters. Mahendravarman has been known as an accomplished poet, musician and a great builder and it is probable that this 'curious minded sovereign'—*Vichitra-chitta*, as he calls himself, was also a painter. My next chapter deals with the only remnants yet known of secular painting of medieval Gujarat. Pictures of this type have hitherto been classified as Jain painting, principally because most of the specimens in the shape of illustrated manuscripts are found in works of Jain theology or legends. It now appears that this peculiar style of illustration had nothing to do with Jainism as a creed, but that it was indigenous to and characteristic of Gujarat at least between the 12th and the 15th centuries. The geographical limits of medieval Gujarat were much wider than now and included much of what is now known as Rajputana. This was probably the region which Tārānāth refers to, as the home of the 'school of the ancient west.' It must

however be recognised that Jainism did furnish the principal *clientèle*, if not the central inspiration to the school of Gujarati painters; for the creed of Mahāvīra Vardhmāna had moved northwards after its eclipse and submergence under the passionate outburst of South Indian Shaivism which broke out in the 6th century A.D. The temples of Delavadā and the ruins of Pātan bear witness to the wealth and influence of the votaries of Jainism, which had become the state religion during the reign of Kumārpāl (1143-74 A.D.). It is significant to note that Jaina subjects came to be painted even in the cave-temples of Chinese Turkestan (see Le Coq's Buddhistische Spätantike, Vol. III) during the 9th and 10th centuries. It is not, however, possible in the present state of our knowledge to trace the march of Jainism beyond the borders of India; for such overflow has not hitherto been even suspected.

There is a considerable amount of material—religious and secular, still extant, but almost entirely in the possession of Jains and Jain Bhandars or libraries to illustrate the pictorial art of Gujarat, which is of extraordinary interest and importance for the knowledge of the common life of the people—their manners, costumes and mode of living. The material consists primarily of illustrated manuscripts and painted boards of wood. There are also a few examples of portraiture of this school and it is possible that we may discover some old 'letters of apology' or *Kshmāpnā* or *Vijnapti-patrā*, which the Jain laity and clergy prepared with so much care and embellishment for sending them to their ecclesiastical head of the neighbouring place on the *Sāmvatsarika*—the last and the holiest of their eight-day festival of fasts. In Chapter VII I have illustrated one such letter painted by a court painter of Jahangir, which vividly recalls the relations between the holy men of the empire and the great Moghul. The document is of special interest, for it was meant merely as a pictorial chronicle of the course of actual events in an ordinary sitting of the Darbar—the authentic recital of an eye-witness and not intended as a token of homage to the

connoisseur-emperor. There is but little in common between this artless version of the Imperial majesty and the gorgeous tableaux of formal sessions which the Moghul painters delighted to paint.

The magnificent development of the Moghul art is shown by a number of masterpieces including the works of the three greatest and best known painters of the reign of Jahangir—Abul Hasan, Mansur Naqqāsh and Bishandās. Abul Hasan has hitherto been known only by the fulsome panegyric of Jahangir in his charming memoirs. The first authentic picture by this great artist will confirm Jahangir's critical opinion of him and incidentally show what a good judge of painting the emperor was. No example of Indo-Persian School is known, which approaches this wonderful picture of the 'Chariot' in the excellence of its brushwork, or in the spirit of its winged imagination. We have here a sample of an amalgam of styles and spirit of the twin offshoots of the ancient Aryan culture, which was destined to be but of short duration. India is a land of early maturity and within the brief space of some 75 years Moghul painting had won its laurels and after the death of Jahangir there was nothing for it but to try and maintain the standards of artistic achievement of the previous reign or to decay and die; and it died within less than hundred years. But art is eccentric It acknowledges no allegiance political or personal; and consequently when the court at Delhi lost its glamour and authority, the artists, like true vagabonds changed their milieu and also their expression. The Hindu art which blossomed in the middle of the eighteenth century at the courts of Hindu principalities from Kashmir and the Himalayan valleys to the States in Rajputana and Bundelkhand in Central India, is no doubt in continuation of the older traditions and inspired by altogether different motives and sentiments than the secular art of the Moghuls; but it nevertheless owes to the latter a great deal in the matter of technique, style and possibly even in personnel in the earlier stages of its development. The story of the migration of

Shyamdās—the ancestor of Molārām to Tehri in the train of Sulaiman Shikoh needs no repetition. There is a picture by him in the collection of Babu Sitārām Sāhu of Benares. It is probably not known that the fugitive prince Jahandar Shah had also painters in his entourage at Benares. One of their descendants Ram Prasad is still working for the Bhārat Kalā Parishad. The Benares school of painting which lingered on to about 1870 A.D. is probably the direct offshoot of the later and decadent art of the Moghuls. What is however meant is not that the Hindu art of the 18th century is merely derivative of the Moghul school of painting; but that both Moghul and Hindu painting must be regarded as the species of the same genus with differences in accent, inflexion, interest and expression. Of the Hindu species there are several vigorous branches, the most notable being those designated as the Jaipur and the Pahāri *qalam* respectively. From the æsthetic standpoint the Jaipur school must however be awarded the place of honour in preference to the Pahāri school; for in the outstanding productions of the former are blended the qualities of imagination and restraint verging on austerity, with such transparent sincerity of feeling that if we are to seek for other comparable works of equal merit, we must hark back to the creative epoch of Harshavardhana, Pulikeshin and Mahendravarman. The picture of Rāsamandala together with the illustration of Govardhana-dharana marks the culmination of the Hindu art of the 18th century. Is it possible that the greatest development of the pictorial art in this country usually took place when the creative age of great sculptures was over; or was there anything more than mere coincidence? It is curious that some of the finest creations of Indian *plastik* were forged during the centuries of strife and turmoil which supervened on the dissolution of Harsha's empire in northern India,—at a time when the graphic art seemed to have fallen on evil days; for no great painting of this period is known to have survived or even existed, so far as we can judge from literary references. It would also appear that the germinal

impulse of medieval *plastik* completely died out about the 15th or 16th century and the pendulum of artistic progress swung once again in favour of the graphic arts. The turn of sculpture may yet come.

Hindu painting of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century has still to be studied in detail; just as the ramifications of the Moghul school, especially towards the south at the courts of Poona and Hyderabad have yet to be traced. The artistic resurgence at the end of the 18th century is a fact of considerable historical importance, for it is precisely this period which is generally looked upon as the time of unrelieved gloom and dismal failure from the Indian point of view. I end my studies with the termination of this last of the great epochs of æsthetic achievement and leave the study of the latest commencement of the artistic renaissance to some future occasion.

I prefer the adjective 'Hindu' to Dr. Coomarswamy's term 'Rajput' painting and have pointed out the local varieties such as Kangra, Garhwal, Benares, Datia, etc., wherever possible. The pictures by Mānakū and Chaitu in particular will come as a pleasant surprise to students of Pahāri painting. I owe their discovery to the loan of the beautiful picture-album by His Highness Maharaja Narendra Shah of Tehri-Gahrwal to whom my warmest thanks are due. The Court-art of Maharaja Sudarshana Shah is a chapter of surpassing interest in the annals of Hindu painting and will remain as a lasting memorial to the generous patronage of art and learning by the house of Tehri.

I am in a special measure indebted to my friend Rai Krishna Das, without whose help the book would probably never have been born. He placed the entire collection of the Bhārat Kalā Parishad (of which he is the sole parent) at my disposal for months and helped me in various other ways. I am under a special debt of gratitude to Prof. Keshavlal Dhruva for permitting me to make use of his unique manuscript of Vasanta Vilāsa and to Muni Jinvijayaji of Gujarat Vidyāpith for his loan of the painted epistle described in Chapter VII; to Babu

Sitārām Sahu of Benares, Rai Bahadur Radha Krishna Jalan of Patna and Mr. P. C. Manuk for the prolonged loans of their pictorial treasures for the purpose of reproduction. My thanks are also due to their Highnesses the Maharajas of Benares and Datia for lending me the beautiful pictures illustrated here and to my friend Khan Bahadur Qazi Azizuddin Ahmad, C.I.E., for procuring me some particulars about Rao Satrujit of Datia; to Nawab Habib-ur-rahman Khan Sahib for the loan of the picture 'Red Blossoms;' to Mr. L. W. Reynolds, C.I.E., I.C.S., President of the Council of Regency, Jaipur, for having the Jaipur masterpieces—Rāsamandala and the Govardhana-dharana, specially photographed for the present book; and the Editor of the 'Rupam' for permission to use some of my contributions which appeared in that journal. In this connection I must not forget the devoted services of my steno-typist Babu Baijnath Prasad.

N. C. MEHTA.

PRATABGARH, OUDH,
The 9th of March 1926.

I

THE PALLAVA FRESCOES OF SITTANNAVĀSAL

IT is a curious fact that the only as well as the earliest traces of ancient Indian paintings should have survived in the caves of Ramgarh, Ajanta and Bagh. The French Archæological Mission has recently discovered similar frescoes—probably coeval with the art of Ajanta, at Bamiyan in Afghanistan, and it is by no means unlikely that further research may reveal the existence of other paintings within the limits of India proper—especially in the ancient Dakshināpatha and the kingdoms of Magadha and Kalinga. There is no doubt about the early origin of the practice of excavating temples, monasteries and even pleasure-retreats out of solid rock, as it is mentioned in the inscriptions of Ashoka and it is probable that the idea of it was first conceived to meet the peculiar requirements of the Jaina and the Buddhist *Sangha* (clergy) some half a millennium before the beginning of the Christian era.

The frescoes of Sittannavāsal were first noticed by the late Mr. T. A. Gopinath Row who wrote that 'these paintings are perhaps as old as the shrine and are in a fairly good state of preservation and need being copied fully.' Death, however, prevented him from realizing his idea of further study and it was left to his friend Prof. G. Jouveau Dubreuil of Pondicherry College to publish the discovery of a new and interesting chapter in the graphic arts of Southern India.* It is a pity that these beautiful frescoes have not been fully copied and examined in detail, for there can be no doubt about their æsthetic merit and high importance from the point of view of history. While it is not yet possible to assign any

* See his article on Pallava Painting in the Indian Antiquary, Volume 52, pages 45-47; also his book on 'The Pallavas' (1917) and Les Antiquités de l'époque Pallava (1916)

definite dates to the pictorial remains of Ramgarh, Ajanta and Bagh, those of Sittannavāsal can be confidently assigned to the time of the great Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I (Circa 600-625 A.D.)

India at the opening of the seventh century was under the stewardship of some exceptionally gifted sovereigns. The territory north of the Narmadā was ruled by that pious prince—Shri Harshavardhana of Kanauj, who distributed every five years the accumulated treasures of the State in a grand assemblage (*moksha-mahā-parishad*) on the confluence of the sacred Jamunā and the Bhāgīrathi with a view to gain religious merit. The territory to the south of the Narmadā was under the sway of the Chalukyan prince Pulikeshin II (Circa 608-648 A.D.) who was 'the lord of three Mahārāshtras containing 99,000 villages.' In the words of Hiuen Tsang 'Shilāditya Rājā (Shri Harshavardhana) boasting of his skill and the invariable success of his generals, filled with confidence himself marched at the head of his troops to contend with this prince—but he was unable to prevail or subjugate him.' The magnificence of the Chalukya court at Vātapipuram or modern Bādāmi in the Bijapur district had travelled beyond the confines of India and an exchange of embassies between the Indian king and the Sassanian prince Khushru II of Iran is recorded by the Muslim historian Tabari. Further south, the Pallava prince, Mahendravarman I, ruled the Drāvida land—a thousand miles in circuit, the chief capital of which was Kānchipuram, the birth-place of Dharmapāla Bodhisatva—a celebrated metaphysician and the predecessor of the revered Shīlabhadra, the head of the great University of Nālanda in Behar. 'The city of Kānchipura,' writes Hiuen Tsang, 'is situated on the mouth of the southern sea of India, looking towards the kingdom of Siṃhala, distant from it three days voyage.' The Chinese pilgrim spent considerable time at the Pallava capital in 640 A.D. during the reign of Narsinhavarman I (Circa 625-650 A.D.) when the Pallava power was at its zenith.

Plate No. I
Fresco-painting of Mahādeva.

Plate No. 2
A Gandharva.

The history of Southern India in the earlier centuries of the Christian era is principally a chronicle of never-ending feuds between the rival dynasties—especially of the Chalukyas and the Pallavas. The incessant strife was stilled only with the disappearance of the Pallavas from the stage of history sometime in the tenth century A.D. It is interesting to note that so far as the honours of war were concerned they lay with Pulikeshin II, who defeated Mahendravarman I in 609 A.D.—eleven years before he came into conflict with Harshavardhana.

Mahendṛavarman I, like his contemporary Harshavardhana of Kanauj, appears to have been a man of varied interests and considerable talents. According to Prof. G. Jouveau Dubreuil it was he who first conceived the 'idea of spreading in the Tamil country the mode of cutting temples in rocks.' A very interesting inscription found in the cave-temple of Mandagappattu would seem to support this view. 'This is the temple constructed under the orders of *Vichitra-chitta* for Brahmā, Ishvara and Vishnu, without bricks, without timber, without metals and without mortar.'* Vichitra-chitta—one with a curious mind, is one of the many epithets or *birudas* which the versatile prince chose to describe himself. Some of the other epithets, which were both Sanskrit and Telugu, are Chitrakārpuli (the tiger, *i.e.*, the best of painters), Avanibhājana, Mattavilāsa, Guṇabhāra, Shatrumalla, etc. An inscription in the Māmandur caves in North Arcot—7 miles from Conjeevaram—the ancient Pallava capital, praises the poetical and the musical talents of this remarkable sovereign, who is known to have composed a 'burlesque' called after his own epithet—*Matta-vilāsa-prahasana*, a treatise on dancing and probably one on music as well.

The shrine of Sittannavāsal is situated at a distance of nine miles to the north-west of Pudukkottai and is situated in the midst of the Pallava country on the southern banks of the

* See Conjeevaram Inscription of Mahendravarman I, by G. Jouveau Dubreuil of Pondicherry College, 1919, which runs thus: Ètad-anishṭakam-adruma-loham-asuṭham-Vichitra-chittena nirmāpitam nripeṇa Brahma-Īshwara-Vishṇu-lakshitāyatanam.

Krishnā, 'being only a few miles from Narttamalai, Malaiyadipatti, Kudumiyamalai and Kunnandarkoil, which contain well-known inscriptions of the epoch of the Pallavas.' Architecturally it is similar to the Māmandur caves. The Sittānnavasal cave is 'a Jaina temple' and 'was carved out of the rock by men who were the contemporaries, co-religionists and friends of Mahendravarman I before he was converted by Appar.'

Apparswāmi was himself a member of the Jaina Sangha—congregation, and bore the name of Devasena; but he subsequently renounced Jainism and led the crusade against it in concert with the saintly Tirunanasambandar. It was the time of great religious upheaval and spiritual awakening, and though Buddhism was the prevalent creed, it was in a state of decadence or rather on the way to its complete absorption within the mother-creed of Brahmanism. The Shaivite reaction, therefore, begun by the great Tamil saint and poet Mānikya Vasagar, was primarily a reaction against the doctrines of Jainism. It was at this time that the fruitful conception of Shiva as Natarāja seems to have been evolved, the earliest plastic representation of which is probably that in the cave temple at the old Chalukya capital Bādāmi excavated about 578 A.D. during the reign of Kirtivarman, the predecessor of Pulikeshin II. The Shaivite revival of the 6th and the 7th centuries in Southern India was similar in its object and range of popular appeal to the great medieval Vaishnavite resurgence in Northern India. It touched the very heart of the people and the Shaivite saints and poets, above all Appar and Sundaramurti fired the popular imagination which found immortal expression in the glorious brass-figures of these early pioneers of the cult of *bhakti* or devotion. Such was the cultural and religious background of the Pallava art which flowered under the direct patronage of the connoisseur prince Mahendravarman I and reached its climax during the reign of his successor Narsinhavarman the great (Circa 625-650 A.D.). The latter is best known by the magnificent and gorgeously sculptured temples of Mahābalipuram or Mahāmallapuram, 35

Plate No. 3
An Apsarā.

miles to the south of the city of Madras, known after his own epithet of Mahāmalla—the great warrior.

The temple of Sittannavāsal was 'at one time fully decorated, but only the upper parts of the edifice are now intact. So there only remain the paintings on the ceilings, the capitals and the upper parts of the pillars. The principal subject-matter, that is preserved, is a grand fresco which adorns the whole extent of the ceiling of the verandah. This fresco represents a tank covered with lotus. In the midst of the flowers are found fish, geese, buffaloes, elephants and three men who are surely Jains holding lotuses in their hand. The skin of two of these Jains is dark-red in colour and that of the third is bright yellow. Their pose, their colouring and the sweetness of their countenance are indeed charming.' Professor Dubreuil found it impossible to make an exact copy of these paintings, 'whose charms consist in the versatility of design and in gradation of colouring with the half-tones and the light and shade. He considers the fresco of 'the Lotus tank' as 'some scene from the religious history of the Jains.'

'The decoration of the capitals of the two pillars of the façade is well-preserved, and consists of painted lotuses whose blooming stems intertwine with elegance. The pillars themselves are adorned with the figures of dancing-girls. The one on the right side is not well-preserved, but luckily the one on the left has escaped almost completely the ravages of man, rain and time. As this part of the monument is in full light, it was easy for me to make a tracing of it on transparent paper. . . This charming dancing-girl is a *devadāsi* of the temple, for in the seventh century, the Jains and the Buddhists had come to terms with God in regard to the introduction of dancing-girls into their austere religion.'

In other words Prof. Dubreuil is inclined to think that the frescoes deal with some scenes of Jaina theology. This is certainly not the case so far as the splendid figure of the *Ardhanārishwara* (reproduced in Plate No. I) is concerned. It

is an impressive study of the great Mahādeva showing the strength of delineation and directness of treatment which belonged to the palmy days of Ajanta and Bāgh. He wears a *jatā-mukuta*—the crown of hair, and a pair of ear-rings. The ineffable expression of His eyes gives a hint of the unfathomed depths of His divine greatness. The thick-necked figure carrying a lotus bloom in the hand would appear to be one of the tribe of *Gandharvas* disporting himself in a lotus tank. (See Plate No. II.) The eyes and the fingers bear the unmistakable stamp of the subtle vocabulary of expressive gestures and finger poses which the old masters used with such power and unerring insight. The most graceful however of these South Indian pictures are the two representations (Plates Nos. III and IV) of the *Apsaras*—the heavenly danseuses, (or *devadāsis*, according to Prof. Dubreuil), whose supple movements have been seized and rendered with the ease and sureness, borne of the closest observation and æsthetic insight. It was left to the artists of Southern India to crystallize into immortal form, the rhythm of dance and the energy of dynamic movement, as seen respectively in the glorious figures of swaying Apsaras, 'loaded with jewelled ornaments, broad-hipped, narrow-waisted, powerful and graceful as panthers,' and in the noble conception of Shiva as Natarāja—the Divine Dancer.

It is important in this connection to remember that all the temples hitherto known of the time of Mahendravarman I are dedicated to the deities of Brahmanism and not to Jaina Tirthaṃkaras. It is therefore unlikely that the Sittannavāsal pictures are Jaina in their subject matter; but it is impossible to say anything decisively unless more is known of these pictorial remains.*

For purposes of comparison with the Shaivite paintings of Sittannavāsal is reproduced one of the Bāgh pictures probably Jaina or Buddhist in its subject matter, depicting a group of

* The Sittannavāsal pictures reproduced here were copied from tracings exhibited at the All-India Art Exhibition of 1925, by Ramaprasad of the Bhārat Kalā Parishad.

Plate No. 4
An Apsarā.

Plate No. 24
Krishna and Rādhā.

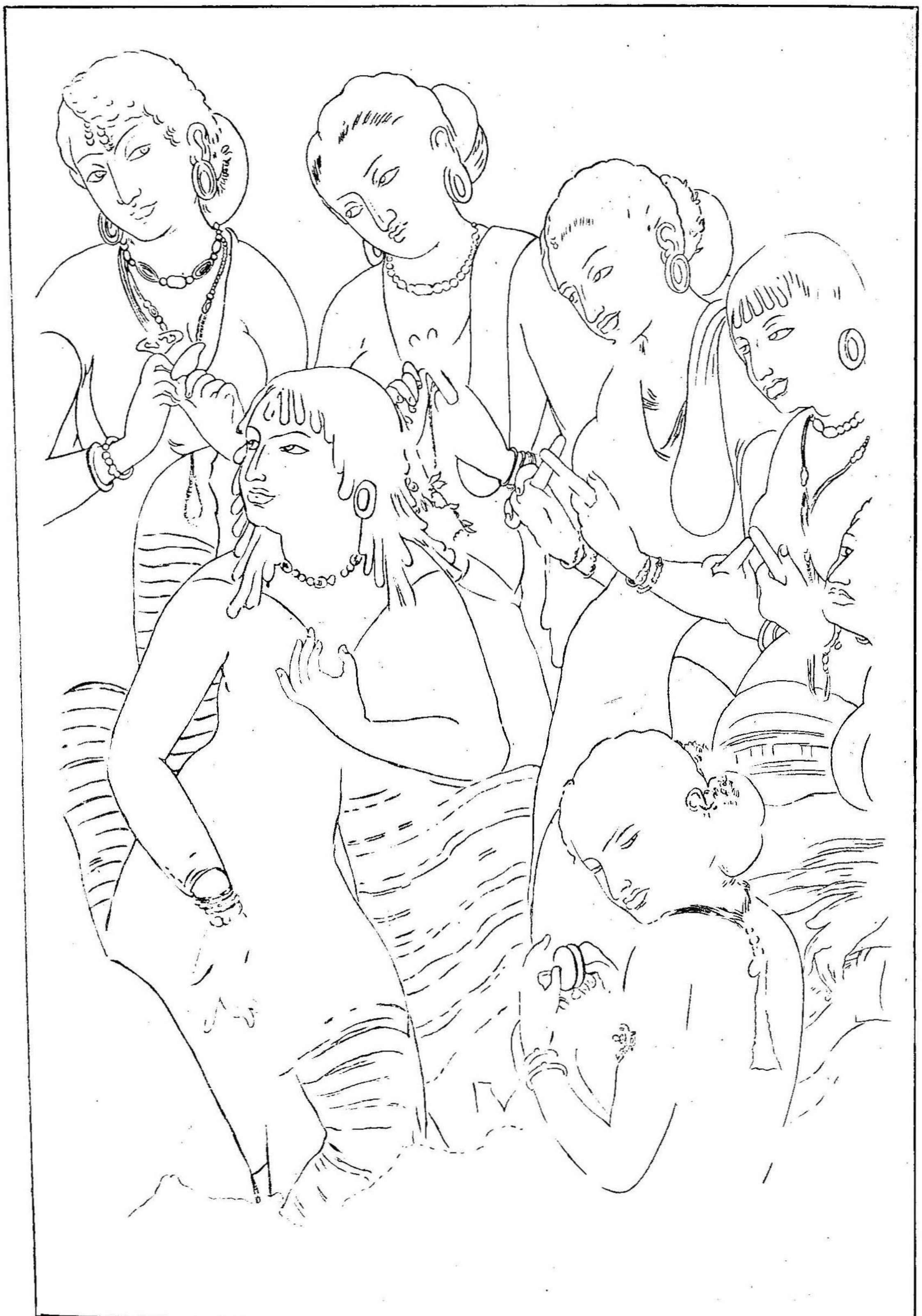

PLATE No. 5.

A Music Party (Bagh Fresco).

women engaged in dance.* (Plate V.) The entire scene, only a portion of which is shown here, is one of extraordinary beauty and singular merit even among the great masterpieces of Ajanta and Bāgh. About a dozen women are engaged in dance and so exquisite is the rhythm of it that even the *Arhats* and *Apsaras* are seen descending from the heavens to witness it. In the eloquent words of Griffiths 'the supple wrists, palms and fingers' of these beautiful women 'beseech, explain, deprecate and caress.' Six *Arhats* clad in *dhoti* are seen gracefully coming down from above, while an equal number of the heavenly damsels including one with a kind of guitar enters from the other direction. About a third of the panel is filled with these divine figures, who have come to participate in the carnival of music and dance.† It should be noted that the dance-party consists entirely of women. One of these wears a wig on the head, a belt round the waist and is attired in a blouse with long sleeves coming up to the wrists. The principal *danseuse* is clad in striped *pyjamas* more like 'shorts' reaching up to the knees. Another woman is dressed in a frock much like the evening dress, affected by modern European women and may be an adaptation of the Buddhist monastic robe. It is in one piece covering the shoulders and reaching down the knees. The women wore circular ear-rings, beautiful arm-bands and exquisite necklaces and did their hair in an amazing variety of ways. 'Great pains are lavished on the correct rendering of the manifold fashions of hair-dressing. Sometimes it is frizzed in front with luxuriant ringlets, now unknown in feminine India. Or a chignon is tied at the back with a coronal of flowers over it, or large lotus blooms are arranged among its masses. Sometimes knots of hair are looped at the side of the head and adorned with flowers, while the still prevalent fashion of confining it with chains of woven wire or jewelled string, attached to

* The larger scene is reproduced in Mukul Dey's 'My pilgrimages to Ajanta and Bagh,' page 237 (1925). The entire scene described here has recently been painted by Asit Kumar Haldar.

† Not shown in plate V.

elaborate ornaments of beaten work in gold and silver, is often followed.' *

* See Griffith's Ajanta Paintings.

N.B.—Professor K. H. Dhruva has drawn my attention to a very interesting reference to fresco-painting in the literature of the 6th century A.D. The great rival of Chāṇakya-Rākshasha compares his unsuccessful policy to *painting without the substance of the walls*:—

Saiveyam mama chitra-karma-rachanā bhittim vinā vartate.

Wall-paintings—*Bhitti-chitra* must have been in considerable vogue to have been used as material for literary metaphors. It should be mentioned that the reference cited above occurs in the well-known play—Mudrā-Rākshasha—a work of the 6th century A.D. by Vishākhdatta.

The Kashmiri poet Rājashekhara puts painters and modellers (*Chitra-lepya-kṛit*) in the category of poets of *Apabhraṃsha*—the language which was in common use in his time. *Chitra-lepya-kṛit* must be taken as referring to fresco-painters and the high position assigned to them is an index of the popularity of the art of painting. I am indebted to Prof. Dhruva for this reference occurring in the Sāhitya Mīmānsā of Rājashekhara dating approximately 900 A.D.

II

SECULAR PAINTING IN GUJARĀT—XVTH CENTURY.

THE death of Harshavardhana of Kanauj in A.D. 648 marks the end of a well defined epoch in the political as well as in the pictorial history of India. The most glorious chapter of Indian painting, which had spread over a space of six centuries, had just closed when the last of the immortal frescoes was completed in the cave temples of Ajanta. The remains of Sirguja, Ajanta, Bagh and Sittanvāsala are the only surviving remnants and also the most mature fruits of early Indian painting ranging from the first to the middle of the seventh century. Beyond a few rare illustrated Jain manuscripts said to belong to the 12th and 13th century nothing is known of the pictorial art of Hindustan, during the centuries intervening between the death of Harshavardhana and the accession of Akbar. According to Dr. Coomarswamy there are but two MSS. of *Kalpsūtras* which are dated earlier than the MS. of *Vasanta Vilāsa*. One is the illustrated palm-leaf Pātan MS. dated equivalent to 1237 A.D. * and another of the India Office Library dated 1427 A.D. The MS. of *Vasanta Vilāsa* is therefore the earliest record of *secular* medieval paintings subsequent to the fresco paintings of Ajanta and prior to the court pictures of the Moghuls.[1] Its existence was brought to my notice during the course of a lecture on Indian painting at Ahmadābād. It was placed at my disposal by Prof. K. H. Dhruva, perhaps the greatest living authority on old Gujarāti, to whom I am also

* See Epitome of Jainism (1917) by P. C. Nahar & K. Ghosh. The portraits of Kumārpāl and his teacher Hemachandra though indifferently reproduced, are interesting as specimens of 'Jaina' portraiture, which is in a class by itself.

1 See Dr. Coomarswamy's Catalogue of Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1924), Part IV, pp. 30-37; also his notes on Jaina Art (Journal of Indian Art and Industry, Vol. XVI, No. 122-8, pp. 82-97). Dr. Coomarswamy writes to me that there are some post-Ajanta paintings at Ellora.

indebted for allowing me to make use of his notes on *Vasanta Vilāsa* published in the memorial issue of Haji Muhammad Allah Rakhiya Shivji.

It was written in Vikrama Samvat 1508 (=1451 A.D.) at Ahmadābād by Āchārya Ratnāgar for the instruction of Shāh Shri Chandrapāl, son of Shri Shāh Depāl.[1] The copyist of the MS. specifically says that he wrote it during the reign of Bādshāh Ahmad Shāh Qutub-bud-din, the ruler of Gujarat. But according to Forbes' Rās Mālā Ahmad Shah had already died on 14th July 1443, and was succeeded by his son Mohammad Shah.[2] The MS. is written on cloth in the shape of a long roll, as is still used in writing horoscopes in the orthodox style. It is 436 inches long and 9·2 inches broad, including the lefthand margin 1 inch wide, and the righthand margin of ¾ inch in width.

The subject matter of *Vasanta Vilāsa* is the advent of Spring, especially the month of *Phālgun*. The love described is that of husband and wife, which according to the poet 'has now increased three-fold; for the Spring has come and Nature is fragrant and the sky cloudless.' It appears that Āchārya Ratnāgar was merely the copyist and not the author of this lyrical poem. It is possible however that he furnished the illustrations; for the other MS. copy known of the poem, in the Deccan College Library, is without any pictures and also without any date, and is in the form of a *Pothi*, containing 8 pages—each page having 11 lines and each line having 48 letters. While the Gujarāti verses are practically the same in both the copies, there is great divergence as regards Sanskrit and Prākrit verses. The Deccan College copy contains 225 verses and is beautifully written in the traditional Jain method. Our illustrated copy of *Vasanta Vilāsa* happens to be also one of the earliest known MSS. of Gujarati literature and is being edited by

[1] शुभं भवतु लेखक-पाठकयो : ॥छा॥छा॥ श्री गूर्जर श्री-मालवंसे साहश्रीदेपालसुत-साहश्रीचंद्रपाल-आत्मपठनार्थं ॥ श्रीमन्नृप-विक्रमार्क-समयातीत संवत १५०८ वर्षे महामांगल्य-सभाद्रपद शुदि ५ गुरौ अद्येह श्रीगूर्जरधरित्र्यां महाराजाधिराजस्य पातशाह-श्रीअहमदसाहकुतुवदीनस्य विजय-राज्ये श्रीमदहम्मदावाद-वास्तुस्थाने आचार्य-रत्नागरेण लिखितोऽयं वसंत विलास : ॥छा॥छा॥

[2] See A. K. Forbes' Rās Mālā (1924), Vol. I, page 336. Forbes' date must be wrong.

[3] See Coomarswamy Op. cit page 33.

PLATE No. 6.
A picture from Vasanta Vilāsa.

the veteran scholar Prof. K. H. Dhruva and will shortly be published by the Gujarāt Vernacular Society at Ahmadābād.

The poem is obviously composed on the pattern of the celebrated *Ritu Samhar* of Kālidās. It has 82 verses written in separate panels on a white background of specially prepared surface generally in black and red ink. The gold illuminated writing, however, has suffered more than the writing in black or red ink. Blue ink is used in the 8th and 11th panel of writing. There are 79 pictures, which alternate with each verse of the old Gujarati lyric. The largest picture is 5·7 inches in length and 7·6 inches in breadth, excluding the margins on either side. The size of an average picture is 3·5 inches by 7·7 inches. The first four pictures have practically disappeared.

The pictures are not by way of illustrations of the verses, but may be regarded as a sort of pictorial interpretation of the perennial themes of Love and Spring. They are painted in oblong panels with all the directness, vigour and concentrated intensity of primitive art. The figures are bound by bold and definite lines, and represent fundamental types and forms with no attempt whatsoever either at verisimilitude or even outward elegance. The artist is more concerned with his narrative than with the exhibition of his accomplishment; and consequently the utmost possible use is made of symbols and suggestion, regardless of the harmonies of throbbing colour and balanced composition. The colour scheme is extremely simple, and there is a preponderance of yellow, red and blue. The background is generally yellow. Sometimes within the space of a single panel, is represented more than one episode by the simple device of putting in a partition-line between the two incidents. The composition is invariably simple and one feels in looking at these naîve but forceful drawings, as if they were only abridged versions of large fresco paintings, which the old masters used so effectively for narration and ideal representation. Mere technical skill is always held in reserve, in complete subordination to the narrative flow of the pictures. The proportions of various

objects in a composition appear to be based more on the requirements of wall paintings rather than of miniature drawings. Shading, foreshortening, perspective, complexities of colour are conspicuous only by their absence. "The art is one of pure draughtsmanship; the pictures are brilliant statements of the facts" of the poem. "There is no pre-occupation with pattern, colour or texture for their own sake; but these are achieved with inevitable assurance in a way that could not have been the case had they been directly sought. The drawing is in fact the perfect equilibrium of a mathematical equation or a page of a composer's score. Theme and formula compose an inseparable unity; text and pictures form a continuous relation of the same dogma in the same key."[1]

A few effortless lines suffice to depict men and women, birds and animals quivering with life and movement. Every imaginable posture is portrayed with the same unconscious but nevertheless sure craftsmanship; and every gesture is rendered with the mastery born of observation and study. A few deft touches, apparently so easy, contrive to breathe all the complex emotions in the expressions of the men and women painted. A semi-circle slightly emphasised or pointed at the corners, with a single curve for the brows is enough to make up the eyes—almost stretching to the ears. The use of flower garlands and of large star-shaped ear ornaments by men and women appears to have been general in India of the 15th century. Women are shown as carrying parrots on their fingers, as was the fashion with men later in India and Iran to have hunting falcons. The strange thing, however, is that the Hindus appear to have had the same liking for the beards as the Musalmans, for all the male figures in these 15th century pictures have short beards[2]

[1] See Dr. Coomarswamy's Jain Paintings and MSS., pp. 32-7.

[2] The fashion of keeping beards is an old Indo-Iranian custom. Some of the Vedic deities such as Indras and Pooshan are described as bearded in the Ṛigveda. While the fashion has retained its hold in Iran up to the present day, it seems to have suffered numerous vicissitudes in this country. Beard is practically unknown in Gupta sculpture and in paintings of Ajanta and Bagh. See an interesting article on 'Shaving in Ancient India' by Durgashankar Shastri in Gujarati 'Purātatva' pp. 171-180, Vol. I.

and long hair tied in knots at the back. Some of them are shown with a blue halo encircling the head.

Hermann Goetz has recently made use of sartorial evolution in fixing the dates of Indian miniatures, Moghul and Rajput, executed during the period of Moghul sovereignty.* From this point of view the illustrated MS. of *Vasanta Vilāsa* is specially interesting. It should be noted at the outset that the costumes of Vasanta Vilāsa have reference only to Gujarat of the 15th century ; and they must, therefore, be regarded as typical only of Western India. Men wore *dhoti* reaching up to the ankles with a short scarf thrown across the shoulders, leaving the upper-half of the body uncovered. In an animated panel illustrating a hunting episode a man is shown in dhoti only up to the knees with a scarf across the shoulders. He is bare-headed and carries a quiver of arrows by his side and is seen in pursuit of a buck and a doe. This dress appears to have been the typical Hindu male attire for at least the past 2,000 years. There have been only minor variations in the male outfit during the slow march of centuries. The *pyjāmā* appears to have been totally unknown, as also the turban which came into fashion with the advent of the Moghuls half a century later and was adopted by Indian aristocracy, Hindu and Musalman, as the national costume at least in the courts of northern India and Rajputana. The headgear usually employed is a kind of peaked cap or *mukuta*, which degenerated later into the hideous cap of the present day. Men wore a pair of bracelets—sometimes as many as six on each arm with a golden band just above the right elbow. All the men without exception bear the Vaishnavite tilak on the forehead—two straight lines with or without a connecting bridge at the bottom. The invariable presence of this Vaishnavite symbol testifies to the great resurgence of the popular cult of *Bhakti* or devotion, which swept through the entire country during the 15th and the 16th centuries, and the

* See 'Kostüm-u-Mode an den Indischen Fürstenhöfen in der Gross-Moghulzeit in Jahrbuch der Asiatischen Kunst 1924,' pp. 67-101.

echoes of which can still be heard amidst the clash and conflict of our modern life. It will be noticed that the 15th century male costume differs but little from that in vogue during the period of the Ajanta paintings. Important personages (such as Avalokiteshawara in the famous Ajanta masterpiece) wore dhoti reaching to the knees and a *mukuta* with the portion of the body above the waist bare. The *mukuta* only had changed, becoming less elaborate and let it be said more ugly, till it became a mere travesty of a dignified headgear during the 19th century.

While the male costume appears to have followed a stereotyped design for centuries, feminine draperies have been subject to radical changes of fashion. The *Sāri* typical of modern Gujarat was not known to the artists of Vasanta Vilāsa. The women wore a long, gaily coloured scarf broadest at the ends coming down from the shoulders and hanging loose below the knees. The lower portion of the body was wrapped in a different coloured *dhoti* much in the same way as is done at the present day in Bengal and the United Provinces. The skirt seems to have been unknown. A tight-fitting bodice or *choli*, covering the bust almost down to the waist a little above the navel, and covering the arms up to the elbows was in vogue. The arms were practically loaded with bangles ; and a variety of necklaces—chains of gold and garlands of flowers, hanging down the waist adorned the neck. Men and women decorated the ears with *karna-phool* (large circular ear-rings) and both put the Vaishnavite symbol on the forehead. The circular red mark between the eye-brows, characteristic of all married Hindu women of to-day with their husbands alive, appears to have been sometimes substituted in place of the customary lines of religious symbolism. The elaborate and magnificent coiffures noticed at Ajanta and Bagh seems to have completely disappeared ; and the Gujarati ladies of the 15th century contented themselves by wearing their hair loose and weaving them into elaborate knots coming down below the waist and sometimes even reaching up

to the knees. While the nose-ring, which appears to have been a Muslim innovation, was unknown, women wore a diamond or a pearl as nose-drop. Women of lower classes went about bare-headed and the *mukuta* appears to have been a monopoly of feminine aristocracy. Women are often shown as carrying flowers and also a sort of *tamburā*—a long-stringed instrument, hung on a bamboo-frame without the sounding gourd with an axe-shaped decoration at one end. Both men and women wear anklets. The ancient girdle, which is even now worn in rural Gujarat, is noticeably absent from the list of feminine ornaments.

It should be noted that though the pictures of Vasanta Vilāsa are executed in a style commonly known as Jaina, they have nothing to do with Jainism or with any distinctive traditions of Jaina aesthetics. In fact the *dramatis personæ* of the poem are all Hindus, as is evident from the marks on their foreheads. The label 'Jaina' was originally used by Coomarswamy in describing early medieval pictures, simply because they occurred in MSS. of Jaina religion and theology. There can be no doubt that these so-called Jaina pictures are artistically in the direct line of descent of the older schools of fresco-painters; and if one were carefully to compare the large size paintings on the walls of Ajanta, Bagh and Sittanvāsala, and the small scale illustrations of medieval MSS., the principal difference is one of scale only. The technique is essentially the same, though the emphasis on the aesthetic side has greatly shifted in these miniature paintings of Jaina MSS. and the 15th century poem—Vasanta Vilāsa.

It is a noteworthy fact that all the great masterpieces of ancient Indian painting come from the south and the west of India. Agra and Delhi were unknown as centres of artistic traditions till the munificent patronage of the Timurid princes reared up a school of painters who continued to work till the extinction of the political supremacy of the Moghuls. The Tibetan historian Tārānāth writing in 1608 ascribed the early wall paintings to superhuman agency, though he noted that

equally good work continued to be produced for several hundred years after the death of Gautam Buddha. The Mauryan palaces were attributed by him to the agency of the Yakshas, whose achievements according to him were equalled by the paintings and other masterpieces wrought by Shringdhara, a native of Maru, the founder of the school of the 'Ancient West.' Shringdhara was thus an artist of Mārwād or Jodhpur in Rajputana, probably at the court of Shilāditya Guhila of Mewar about the middle of the 7th century and carried on the traditions of his craft at a time when India was about to enter into a period of prolonged darkness, anarchy and disruption of her social and political organisation. (See V. A. Smith's History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon, pp. 304 to 307.) Rajputana resisted longest the onslaughts of Muslim invaders and was never incorporated as an integral part of the Delhi Empire. The valley of Gujarat was ruled on the other hand till the end of the 13th century by a succession of brilliant princes, who made Aṇhilwād Pātan one of the noblest capitals in India. The school of the 'Ancient West' must have had its votaries at the provincial courts of Rajputana and Gujarat. Jainism became the State religion at the court of Patan during the reign of Kumārpāl, (1142-73 A.D.) who was converted to the gospel of Mahāvīra Vardhamāna by that versatile scholar Suri Hemachandra. A systematic search of the old Jaina bhāndārs or libraries at Jaisalmir, Pātan, Ahmadābād and Sonāgir in the Datia State is bound to throw additional light on this intervening period of darkness and ignorance, for the absence of any considerable remains of pictorial art belonging to the pre-Mogul period is largely due to inadequate survey of the existing material.

While it is useful to recognise the distinguishing features of the work executed under Jaina patronage, it is essential to remember that Jainism as such had had no distinctive art traditions of its own. Whatever peculiarities it has, are in the nature of inflexional variations of a language. Somehow or other the aesthetic element was overshadowed by other considerations ;

and size rather than strength in sculpture, elaboration of detail more than the beauty of form or outline in building, and narration more than accomplished expression in pictures became the dominant qualities of Indian art as evolved under the austere influence of Jainism.

While the pictures of Vasanta Vilāsa and other manuscripts are genetically of the same class as the ancient frescoes, they have nothing of that inherent charm and gracious beauty of the old masterpieces. On the other hand they have nothing in common except the size with the later miniatures; for not only the aim of the earlier miniatures is more limited but even the technique is fundamentally different, being more direct and more archaic in its mode of expression. It is very probable that the art as exemplified in the pictures of Vasanta Vilāsa and the Jaina manuscripts was a popular form of pictorial expression, which relied for its effect on its power of allusion and association rather than on impeccable craftsmanship.

The stately kingdom of Siddharāja and Kumārapāla was lost by Karna Deva Vāghelā (1295-1304 A.D.)—the last Hindu prince of Gujarat—and incorporated into the empire of Delhi by Malik Kāfur, the eunuch general of Alauddin Khilji (1295-1315 A.D.). It was made into a separate principality in 1404 A.D. by Muzaffar Khan; and though it continued under Muslim domination for several centuries, its arts and crafts did not lose their individuality. The Hindu-Muslim architecture of Ahmadabad shares with the Sharki monuments of Jaunpur, the unique distinction of achieving a happy synthesis of conflicting ideals as embodied in edifices of lasting glory. The pictures of Vasanta Vilāsa, however, though executed after a century and a half of Muslim domination in Gujarat are absolutely unaffected by foreign influences; possibly because the artistic creations of the great Islamic art-centre—Iran—had not yet won the renown in the Asiatic world, which it later acquired under Kamāluddin Bihzad (1487-1542 A.D.).

Something may be said here about the series of vernal

pictures and the origin of early secular art. Painting in India seems to have been early differentiated according as it was meant for religious or secular purposes, and though no actual specimens of this early non-religious art, chiefly cultivated at the courts of princes and noblemen, prior to the 15th century have survived, we have some evidence in the shape of scattered references in the classical Sanskrit literature as to the level of excellence reached by the earlier masters. The scale of secular painting appears to have been always smaller and the medium generally paper or cloth. The art of portrait painting can be traced at least to the first and the second centuries A.D. *Somadevā*—a Kashmiri poet, wrote his Kathāsaritsāgara in 1070 A.D. This collection of stories was founded on a work called '*Brihat Kathā*' by Guṇā-dhya, a writer who lived in the first or the second century A.D., and wrote in the Paishāchi dialect of the Prākrit. A similar and a shorter collection was made by a contemporary of Somadeva-Kshemendra Vyās Dās in 1037 A.D. under the designation of *Brihat Kathā Manjari.* In one of the stories the prince Vikrama of Ujjain is presented with an *album* (*Pustikā*) *of portraits* by his court painter. The royal eyes alight on a matchless representation of a beautiful damsel and the inevitable happens. The prince is smitten with love and he does not rest until he has found the original of his likeness. Fortunately the original was up to the standard of the likeness and the scene finishes in a happy wedding of Vikrama and the princess Malayāvati.* The dramatist Bhāsa—the foremost among the predecessors of Kālidāsa has cleverly made use of the motif of the pictorial roll in his one act play Dūta-vākya. Krishna, who has come as the emissary for peace on behalf of the Pāndavas, has just been announced by the chamberlain in the court of Duryodhana. The latter with a view to ignore the presence of such a distinguished guest and at the same time to avoid the appearance of giving offence, orders the door-keeper to bring him the roll of

* *Vide* Soma-Deva's Kathā-Manjari story 122, verses 23-4, page 577 (*Nirnaya Sagar Press,* Edition 1915).

pictures (*Chitrapaṭa*) representing the scenes of Draupadi's humiliation in the open court, when Yudhishtira had staked her as a pawn in the game of dice and lost her. Duryodhana admires 'the richness of colouring, the expression of feelings, the adequacy and clearness of delineation' of the pictures. The custom of painting rolls of pictures must therefore be referred back to at least the first century A.D. and appears to have been in vogue till about the 18th century.*

The major portion of the first act in Bhavabhūti's *chef-d'oeuvre* Uttara-Rāma-Charita is taken up with the inspection of a *picture-portfolio* drawn by an artist called *Arjuna*† depicting the epic tale of Rāma's adventures. Sītā is so much moved by the likenesses that she has to be gently reminded that she is only witnessing pictures and not actualities of life. These Uttara-Rāma-Charita pictures must have been similar to the roll of Vasanta Vilāsa pictures, as is evidenced by the fact that the various episodes of Rāma's life are unfolded in a continuous series. The practice of depicting narrative pictures is therefore as early as the history of Indian art itself, as the monuments of Bhārhut, Sānchi, Ajanta and others testify.

It would appear the art of painting was widely cultivated as a diversion and a source of instruction by the cultured bourgeoisie. The dominance of design and the subservience of mere technique, which is observeable in these 15th century pictures as well as in paintings of the 'Jaina' school, which are allied in style and spirit, can easily be explained on this assumption. It is an essentially bourgeois art akin to the art which expresses itself even at the present day in mural decorations and in exquisite albeit ephemeral displays of geometrical patterns in a variety of colours in front of the middle-class homes in Gujarat on festive occasions. Though the appeal of such an art is not

* अहो अस्य वर्णाढ्यता । अहो भावोपपन्नता । अहो युक्तलेखता । सुव्यक्त मालिखितोऽयं चित्रपटः ।
The MS. of Vasanta Vilāsa as well as the painted letter illustrated in Chapter VII are also *chitrapata* or picture-rolls mentioned by Bhāsa.

† The earliest name of a Hindu painter known. Arjuna must have been a sufficiently famous artist to have been thought of being mentioned by a dramatist of the 8th century.

primarily emotional, it springs from the depths of the innermost consciousness and the innate joy in life, and therefore unconsciously succeeds in portraying the actual life of reality and ideals with its bewildering nuances—trivial and sublime, physical and spiritual, gross and subtle as one complex unity. Though not so accomplished as the school of temple painting or the court-art of princes, it is of exceptional value as a unique, comprehensive and popular record of the every-day life of the people.

Things change but slowly in this country, and it is surprising to see from these 15th century pictures, what little change there has been in furniture, fashions and household wares during the space of well-nigh four centuries. Medieval gentry in Gujarat appears to have been peculiarly fond of richly coloured, generally blue and red bed-spreads, covering large commodious beds, and used mounted heads of deer as pegs for hanging clothes. Apart from the characteristic examples reproduced in plates Nos. 6 and 7, it may be worthwhile to describe a typical picture in detail. The subject of *Mānini* a proud and offended mistress, is a favourite theme with medieval poets, and one of the panels depicts a lady with one foot dangling, seated on an elaborately decorated bench, painted blue, similar in design to a modern drawing-room piano-stool. The lover is seen bowing at the foot of the irate lady, who is being fanned by a female whisk-bearer. A parrot is shown imprisoned in a cage, and a pair of bees is seen hovering over the two women standing behind the lover. A bee is also flying over the head of the offended lady. The picture is painted on a completely yellow background and the various figures are drawn with considerable animation and movement.

Love being the dominant sentiment, it is but natural that there should be scenes laid in gardens and groves, articulate with the music of bees and birds. Plants are generally treated in a conventional manner—especially the plaintain, the mango, the stately palm and the beautiful pomegranate. One of the panels shows a small pond situated in a corner of the garden

PLATE NO. 7.

An illustration from Vasanta Vilāsa.

with swimming fish and four cypresses towering over the edge. Water is indicated by wavy lines, faintly bluish in tinge. Clouds, on the other hand, are represented by bold curves in blue. Rocks are painted as stumpy elevations sharply defined by irregular lines.

One panel is of pure landscape—the earliest landscape painting known in India. In an animated sketch is shown a tiger in pursuit of a herd of deer. A pair of rabbits is in flight in the opposite direction, while a black buck jumping over rocky terrain * has just been caught by the tiger.

The author of the *Vasanta Vilāsa* says:

"The mango is in bloom and the bees have been wakened by the smoke of the flaming hearts of separated lovers." The *Madhupa*—the honey-loving bee—therefore figures prominently in the pictorial delineations of the Spring. It is shown flying over the vernal blossoms and sipping their juice even as a lover.

The Hindu mind has always felt all life as the manifestation of the Divine, and consequently there is no sharp differentiation between the life of man and that of animals and plants. It instinctively attributes to the latter, intimate participation in the emotional life characteristic of human beings. The whole universe is shown rejoicing at the advent of the Spring and the woodlands are astir with the hum of the moth, the joyous notes of the cuckoo and the shrill cries of the parrot and the peacock. The fawn beloved of painters and poets is also there, with all the wealth of suggestion with which it has been endowed by Indian imagination. A couple of pictures must be described according to modern European standards as obscene.

A word may be said about the quality of the poem itself. The poet deals with the emotional aspect of the Spring in a series of exceptionally powerful stanzas full of brilliant imagery and vivid word-painting. The following verse will serve as an illustration :—

रंग भूमि सजकारी झारी कुंकुम घोल ।
सोवन सांकल सांधि बांधि चम्पक दोल ॥

* See illustrations in Rupam, Nos. 22-3.

The poet here describes the preparations made for enjoying the Spring: "The pleasure-ground has been decorated and watered and the swing of the Champaka flowers made ready with golden chains." *

* Portions of this chapter appeared in the Rupam, Nos. 22-23, 1925.

N.B.—Coomarswamy's Jaina painting, which is Part IV of the Catalogue of the Boston Indian collection, is a pioneer work and naturally does not attempt more than a mere outline of the material at present available. Besides many illustrated manuscripts of Kalpasūtra and Kālkāchārya Kathānakam, there are other purely secular works with illustrations. This pictorial phase should be called the Gujarati School of painting in preference to Jaina painting; for though at present most of the material of this school comes from Jaina sources, there can be no doubt that the peculiar style was indigenous to Gujarat and continued to be so at least till the end of the 17th century. Illustrated manuscripts of the 15th century poem by the name of Shrīpāl-charitam are often found in the Jaina Bhāndārs.

III

SOME JAIPUR PICTURES

IT is very probable that the artistic renaissance which took place in the closing years of the 19th century throughout Hindustan wherever there were Hindu kingdoms and principalities, began somewhat earlier at the court of Jaipur which had ever been the faithful ally of the Moghul sovereigns and had consequently never felt the heavy hand of the Muslim conquerors. Raja Bihari Mull was the first prince of Āmber—the old capital of the Kachhwāhā State, who paid homage to the rising power of the Moghuls, and received a Mansab of 5,000 at the hands of Humayun. His eldest daughter was married to Akbar in 1562 and was one of the first Rajput princesses to enter the Imperial harem. Jahangir was the son of this matrimonial alliance and his mother—Mariam-uz-zamāni—lies buried in a fine mausoleum near Akbar's tomb at Sikandra. His son Bhagwān Dās and the latter's nephew and successor Raja Mān Singh rose to high distinction in the Imperial armies of the Moghuls. Mirza Raja Jai Singh (Circa 1625-1667) was the foremost general even under Aurangzeb, and it is stated that "he had 22,000 Rajput cavalry at his disposal, and twenty-two great vassal chiefs who commanded under him; that he would sit with them in darbar, holding two glasses, one of which he called Delhi, the other Satārā, and dashing one to the ground, would exclaim, "there goes Satārā; the fate of Delhi is in my right hand, and this with like facility I can cast away.'"* The fortunes of the Kachhwāhā State declined after the death of the Mirza Raja on July 12, 1667, at Burhanpur. Sawai Jai Singh (Circa A.D. 1693-1743) succeeded to the throne of Āmber when the Moghul

* See Tod's Rajasthān. P. 1340 vol. III (1920) Oxford University Press.

power was at its zenith. The stately façade of the empire was, however, soon to crumble to pieces under the régime of princes, who were too weak to grasp the royal sceptre with firmness. If Sawai Jai Singh's 'courage had none of the fire which is requisite to make a Rajput hero', his talents for administration and above all, for building and science, have earned him a unique place even in the glorious annals of Rajputana. He built the new city of Jaipur—the only city in India built upon a regular plan with broad streets bisecting each other at right angles with houses constructed on a standard pattern. His astronomical tables—*Zij Muhammadshāhi* named after the then reigning Emperor of Delhi—are still in vogue and his observatories at Delhi, Jaipur, Ujjain and Benares are living monuments to the scientific knowledge and the largeness of vision of that prince of men and astronomers. It was nothing strange if the art of painting also found its votaries at such an intellectual court as that of Jai Singh II. We do not, however, unfortunately possess any accurate information about the pictorial treasures of the time of Sawai Jai Singh. The State archives of Jaipur may one day be opened to the students and then it will be possible to construct the beginnings of a wonderful artistic revival which supervened on the break-up of the Moghul hegemony.

The six large pictures lent by the Council of Regency for the Jaipur Durbar at the first All India Art Exhibition came as a revelation to students of Indian art. The existence of a distinct school of Rajput portraiture has long been known ; but hitherto no such specimens have been known as the two glorious portraits of Sawai Jai Sing II and Maharaja Pratap Singh Ji (1778-1803). These pictures (Plates 8 and 9) are practically life-size and have been executed in a way quite distinct from the method usually adopted by the court painters of the Moghuls. It is more than probable that both the portraits were actually executed about the end of the 18th century, though it is possible that the picture of Sawai Jai Singh is a little earlier. The type depicted is apparently a combination of actual likeness and the conventional

PLATE No. 8.

Sawai Jayasimha II.

PLATE No. 9.

Sawai Pratāpsingh.

figure of art traditions in Jaipur. The elaborate necklaces are shown by solid incrustations. The folds of the flowery muslin are carefully and elaborately brought out. Though both the pictures are in profile, there is a certain chastity of line, amounting almost to *naivetè* which is rarely met with in the domain of portraiture, and by its very sincerity raises the delineation of a human being to something more than a mere likeness. The face of Jai Singh testifies to his great intellectual powers and gives more than a hint of his depths of crookedness which he so successfully employed to the discomfiture of his enemies and rivals. The pose of his hands, though conventional, is striking and the thin delicate fingers point to the blue blood of the Kachhwāhā prince.

Mahārājā Pratāp Singh succeeded to the throne of Jaipur under inauspicious circumstances. He was still a minor when he became king and his mother ruled in his name with a Council of Regency consisting of her paramour— Firoz — elephant driver and the astute Raja Kushali Ram. In the words of Tod, Pratāp Singh 'was a gallant prince and not deficient in judgment; but neither gallantry nor prudence could successfully apply the resources of his petty state against its numerous predatory foes and its internal dissensions.' It was at this time that Alwar was separated from the parent kingdom of Jaipur as a separate entity. The portrait of Pratāp Singh is larger and more elaborate, but the face depicted is the face of an amiable rather than a strong ruler of men. The drawing is absolutely flat and there is not the slightest trace of European influence. The method of composition was to concentrate on the delineation of the face and the elaboration of drapery and ornaments. With limited resources the artists achieved wonderful results; for they were working in a medium and with traditions which they perfectly understood. The Jaipur portraits illustrated here must be considered as among the finest specimens of Hindu portraiture yet known.

The two other pictures '*Rāsamandala*' and 'the lifting of

the mount Govardhana' are of a different type and resemble the two portraits described above in nothing but the size (Plates 10 and 11). These pictures probably painted during the time of Mahārājā Pratāp Singh are indubitably the greatest masterpieces of Jaipur painting and among the very best examples of Indian pictorial art. It is even possible that both of them are creations by the same artist, for the slender figure of Krishna rendered in profile is common to the two pictures and the colour scheme with the predominant black bears a family likeness. Their subject-matter is derived from the inexhaustible fount of Vaishnavite literature.

The cult of loving devotion with Shri Krishna as the central figure arose about the tenth or the eleventh century. It was the way to salvation, open to all irrespective of birth, rank or sex, as contrasted with the highway of knowledge accessible only to the *élite*. This medieval resurgence of popular religion and culture has not yet spent its force, and has continued to dominate the art and literature of the country for practically a millennium.

Krishna and his consort Rādhā—symbolic of the human soul—are seen in the centre leading the dance surrounded by the fair maids of *Braj*, disposed in three concentric circles. Even the gods are there to witness the scene of this Cosmic Dance, and are seen riding in their aerial vehicles and raining flowers from above. The whole picture is pitched in one note of devotional ecstasy and rhythm. The figures and even their draperies are moving in one common note of rhapsody and devotion. An art such as this is to be appraised by canons appropriate to poetry and music rather than by rules applicable to the Western art of verisimilitude. The artist aimed to express the search of the human Soul for the Infinite and he has chosen to render it by means of a legendary and symbolic incident in a posture of absolute humility, complete absorption, and self-forgetfulness.

The arrangement of the picture is also typical of Indian

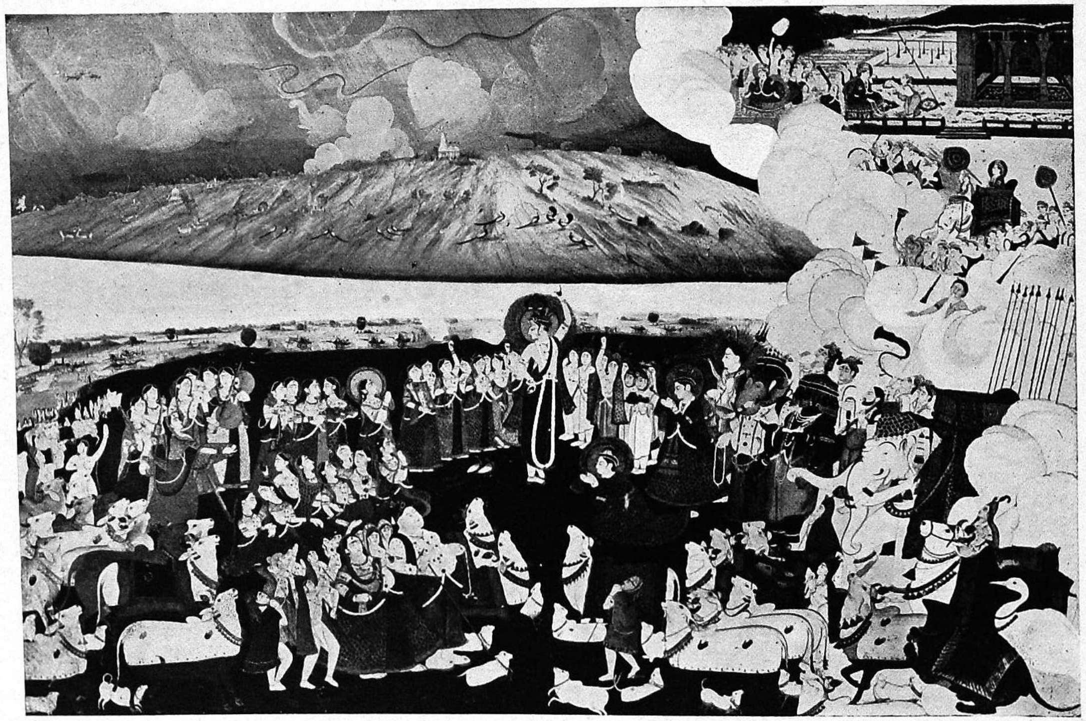

PLATE NO. 10.
Govardhana-dharana.

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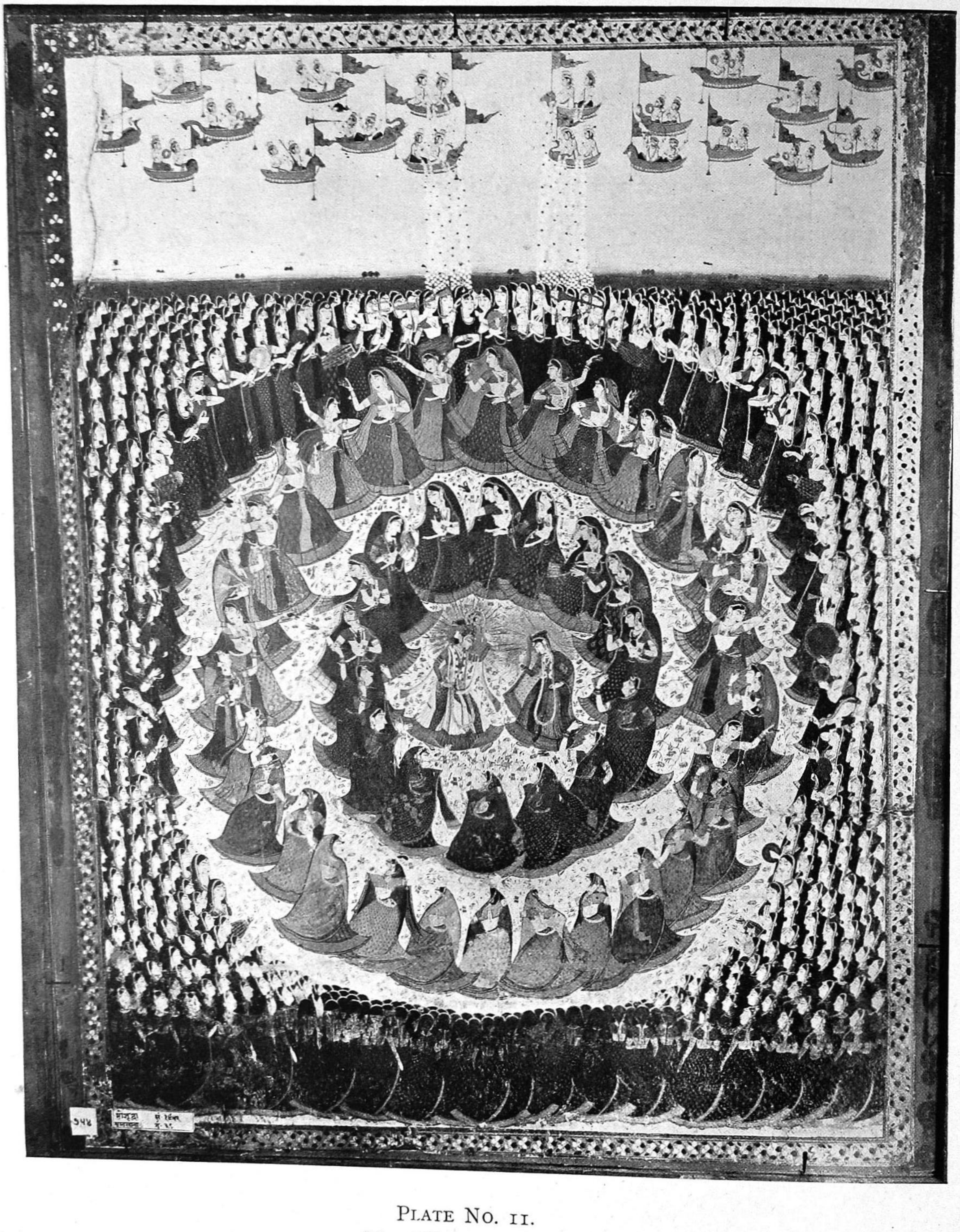

PLATE NO. 11.

The Rāsa-mandala.

painting. It is a commonplace of even untutored criticism that Asian art ignores perspective. It is because Eastern painting, even in its most realistic phases such as the productions by the court-painters of the Moghul emperors, is essentially a mental summary of visual perceptions* rather than mere faithful reproduction thereof *from a certain point in space*. The unities of time and space are therefore frequently disregarded from an European point of view; and even where the subject-matter of a picture is strictly real or historical, the Oriental artist strives to depict within the range of a single painting a series of tableaux or incidents which he could not have physically witnessed at the same time from any given point. Hence Indian group-pictures are often confusing to people used to Western paintings and unfamiliar with the conventions of Oriental art. Asiatic art has generally discarded Western perspective because it obstructed the flight of its vision and interfered with its fundamental notions of mental and imaginative visualisation. In a picture such as the Rāsa-Mandala, the artist has no fixed *point de vue*, as a Western artist always has and who arranges his composition as if it is being enacted on a stage and viewed from one side only. Depth is an essential element in Western technique, while it is generally absent in Eastern art, primarily because the Oriental standpoint is fundamentally different and also because in a large majority of cases the comparatively small size of productions does not require it. Eastern miniatures are to be scanned and 'read' as books. The painters often describe themselves as writers or composers. They make use of what is called 'aerial perspective'; that is to say, the picture is beheld, as it were, from above, and not from a horizontal plane. The convention is admirably adapted for its purpose, for it enables the artist to deal exhaustively with his theme within the limited frame of a single picture, which is as complete in itself as a verse or quatrain of Oriental poetry. Aesthetically it matters little what language of symbols and conventions the artist

* This is even true of some of the best modern portraits by Indian artists.

uses, so long as it is intelligible and effectively conveys his meaning.

The way in which the milk-maids with their backs to the spectator have been silhouetted is altogether admirable. With a few deft touches the figures of the *danseuses* have been visualised. While the two inner rings are actively participating in the dance, the outer circle of women has each a musical instrument to accompany and keep time with the rhythm of the dance. The colour-scheme is extremely simple with the yellow in the centre and black with a touch of gold on the margin, predominating. The central figures of Rādhā and Krishna are treated with astonishing verve and beauty, and in the pose of the divine pair one observes a supreme gesture, which is the beginning of an unique experience in the life of the congregation, which has met in dance and music—in wistful search of the Eternal and the Infinite.

The Gīta-Govinda of Jaideva written about 1170 A.D. may be said to be the first as well as the finest poetical expression of that great devotional wave of *Vaishnavism*, which swept through India and revolutionised the life of the people in the 15th and the 16th centuries. The beginning of the 16th century was a time of great religious, social and literary upheaval; for it witnessed the careers not only of Chaitanaya, Vallabha—the founder of the popular cult of emotional Vaishnavism—the *Pushtimārga*, and Tukārāma—the spiritual preceptor of the great Shivaji and also of Nānak the founder of the virile congregation of the Sikhs.* The conception of Krishna as a young cowherd hero indulging in dalliance with the village-maids of Braj must have come into being about the 15th century, for the few medieval brass images that we have of him sound a note more of ascetic contemplation and complete absorption in the enrapturing strains of his reed than of mundane levity. It is for this reason that the plastic representations of Krishna, wearing a *jatā-mukuta* and dancing with his sandals on, are more satisfying than the pictorial figure

* See Hinduism and Buddhism by Sir Charles Eliot, Volume II, pages 228-262.

of Krishna dressed in *Pītāmbara*—yellow raiment, bejewelled and with plumed headgear.

Popular *Vaishnavism* sounded the innermost depths of the common consciousness, which under its fecund inspiration, found expression in a variety of ways. Unlike the Gupta renaissance of the 4th and the 5th centuries it was a revival of popular culture, which produced in the domain of Hindi literature the lofty poetry of Tulsi, the refined melodies of Sūr Dās, the accomplished verse of Keshavdas, Bihari and Mati Ram and the stirring ballads of Bhūshan. The period of Moghul supremacy was a momentous epoch in the cultural history of Hindustan; for never before had there been such a spontaneous, general and fruitful upheaval of common life. The fabric of the great empire in the days of its greatness was not sustained merely by imposing arrays of serried battalions, but was supported by the general will of the people, as expressed through their natural leaders. It was on account of this that the Moghul Empire has left indelible landmarks of surpassing beauty and towering originality in every sphere of life—literary, artistic and religious.

The miracle of lifting the Mount Govardhana is a favourite theme with Hindu painters and there are many excellent versions of it, the best known perhaps being that attributed to the court artist of Tehri Garhwal—Molārām.* The Jaipur picture, however, is incomparably the finest representation of the subject and as a piece of pictorial art only second to the great painting of Rāsamandala. In the centre is the heroic figure of Krishna holding the mountain aloft on his small left hand finger, so that his beloved companions, the cow-herds, the milk-maids and not the least, those inseparable and dumb friends of his—the cows of Braj which he used to graze on the banks of the Jamuna, may find shelter from the torrents of rain showered by the wrathful Indra—the Lord of Heavens. In the left corner of the picture

* The Jaipur Razmanama has a signed picture of the incident by Paras. Pl. CXXXIV Hendley's Reproductions—the earliest pictorial version known.

at the top is shown the Olympus, screened from the earth below, by an array of rolling clouds. Western influences are clearly visible in the representation of the heavenly abode, as well as in the treatment of the landscape on the banks of the Jamuna. The whole of the Puranic episode is narrated in the picture; but the principal theme is the triumph of Shri Krishna and the humiliation of Indra, who is seen bowing at the feet of the Lord On the left of Krishna is the whole crowd of Olympians, who have come on their respective vehicles to pay homage to the Lord of Braj. Though the composition is a little packed, it is not difficult to see and appreciate the amazing craftsmanship and resourcefulness of the artist. The cow-herds and milk-maids are portrayed in an infinite variety of attitudes and gestures as are the cows rendered in a posture of genuine love and understanding. As examples of animal portraiture, the figures of the crane, the mouse—the vehicle of Lord Ganesha and the *Airāvata*—the white elephant of Indra are of surpassing interest. What could be more fascinating than the study of the frisky calves jumping up to have a fill of their mothers' milk? The whole scene is full of animation and feeling and it is not often that one comes across a masterpiece so rich in imagination as well as execution. The two pictures of *Rāsamandala* and *Govardhandharana* show the heights to which the Jaipur School of painters attained at the end of the 18th century. There is a wonderful panel of Gopis dancing, a bazar version of which has been published in Coomarswamy's Indian drawings (Second Series), plate Nos. 1 and 2. The original panel remarkable for its size and freshness of colouring is in the *Pothikhānā* of Jaipur and is a worthy masterpiece to rank with the pictures illustrated here. *

Two more pictures measuring over 6 ft. by 3 ft. distinct in style and similar in technique to Tibetan banner-painting and Japanese Kakimono are reproduced in plates Nos. 13 and 12.

* A series of plates will be required to show adequately the details of the 2 masterpieces. It was found impossible to have really good photographs of the pictures. The illustrations given here are unsatisfactory and totally inadequate though they are included on the principle that something is better than nothing.

Plate No. 12.
Winter Symbolised.

Plate No. 13.
Summer Symbolised.

They are symbolic of Summer and Winter respectively. In one is a young woman dressed in a mixed Rajput and Muslim costume, standing under a mango tree in fruit, with a doe wistfully looking up. The Sārasa (crane) replaces the deer, in the picture symbolic of Winter and the lady standing under a blossoming *Champaka* shrub holds a parrot—perhaps a *Maina* in her right hand. The fort of Āmber is seen in the background with the new city of Jaipur spread out in front. The foreground is of the conventional design showing the chrysanthemums and sun-flowers in bloom. The varied achievements of the Jaipur School of painters are still to be known to the world. At present they can only be conjectured from the pictures illustrated here for the first time.

IV

A NOTE ON THE BUNDELA SCHOOL OF PAINTING

THE Bundela rulers of Datia and Orchha have been great patrons of art and literature ever since the days of Raja Birsing Deva, known in history as the hired assassin of Sheikh Abul Fazal. Let Jahangir himself speak about the handiwork of this ambitious free-booter: 'I promoted Raja Bir Singh Deo, a Bundela Rajput, who had obtained my favour, and who excels his equals and relatives in valour, personal goodness, and simple-heartedness, to the rank of 3,000. The reason for his advancement and for the regard shown to him was that near the end of my revered father's time, Sheikh Abul Fazal, who excelled the Shaikhzādās of Hindustan in wisdom and learning had adorned himself outwardly with the jewel of sincerity, and sold it to my father at a heavy price. He had been summoned from the Deccan, and since his feelings towards me were not honest, he both publicly and privately spoke against me. At this period, when, through strife-mongering intriguers, the august feelings of my revered father were entirely embittered against me, it was certain that if he obtained the honor of waiting on him (Akbar) it would be the cause of more confusion, and would preclude me from the favour of union with him (my father). It became necessary to prevent him from coming to my court.

'As Bir Singh Deo's country was exactly on the route and he was then a rebel I sent him a message that if he would stop that sedition-monger and kill him he would receive every kindness from me. By God's grace, when Sheikh Abul Fazal was passing through Bir Singh Deo's country, the Raja blocked his road, and after a little contest scattered his men and killed him.

He sent his head to me in Allahabad. Although this event was a cause of anger in the mind of the late King (Akbar), in the end it enabled me to proceed without disturbance of mind to kiss the threshold of my father's palace, and by degrees the resentment of the King was cleared away.'

Abul Fazal was murdered on August 12, 1602. Within three years Salim succeeded as emperor Jahangir and there was nothing which he could deny to his faithful ally and friend Birsingh Deo of Orchha. As a mark of special favour the latter was permitted to build imposing temples at Mathura, Orchha and other places. A man of great ability and no scruples, he soon widened his territories and acquired immense wealth. On his death in 1627 he left fully two crores of rupees buried in wells and other secret retreats in trackless jungles in accordance with the old Bundela custom. He was not only a brilliant soldier but also a man of great vision and a mighty builder. The great palace forts at Orchha and Datia and many other edifices testify to the heroic figure of Birsing Deo. The huge palace at Datia is probably the finest as well as the biggest example of palace architecture in this country. Pile upon pile of building rises in complete symmetry and though there is now nothing but bare walls, the palace still remains the greatest monument that any ruler in Central India ever raised to himself.

A wonderful copy of Hāfiz's *Diwān* dating from the time of Birsing Deo (1605 to 1627) is one of the priceless treasures of the palace library at Datia and one of the most valuable books in Asia. There are a few illustrations beautifully executed on leather parchment, which also forms the material on which the poems are inscribed.

The fief of Datia was granted by Birsingh Deo to his son Bhagwān Rao in 1626. Since then the house of Datia has always maintained a separate entity though acknowledging the seniority of the Orchha branch. Rao Shatrujit (1762-1801) was the eldest son of Raja Indrajit by his first wife Rani Chitra Kunwari, daughter of Dhandera of Sirol, and was the sixth ruler

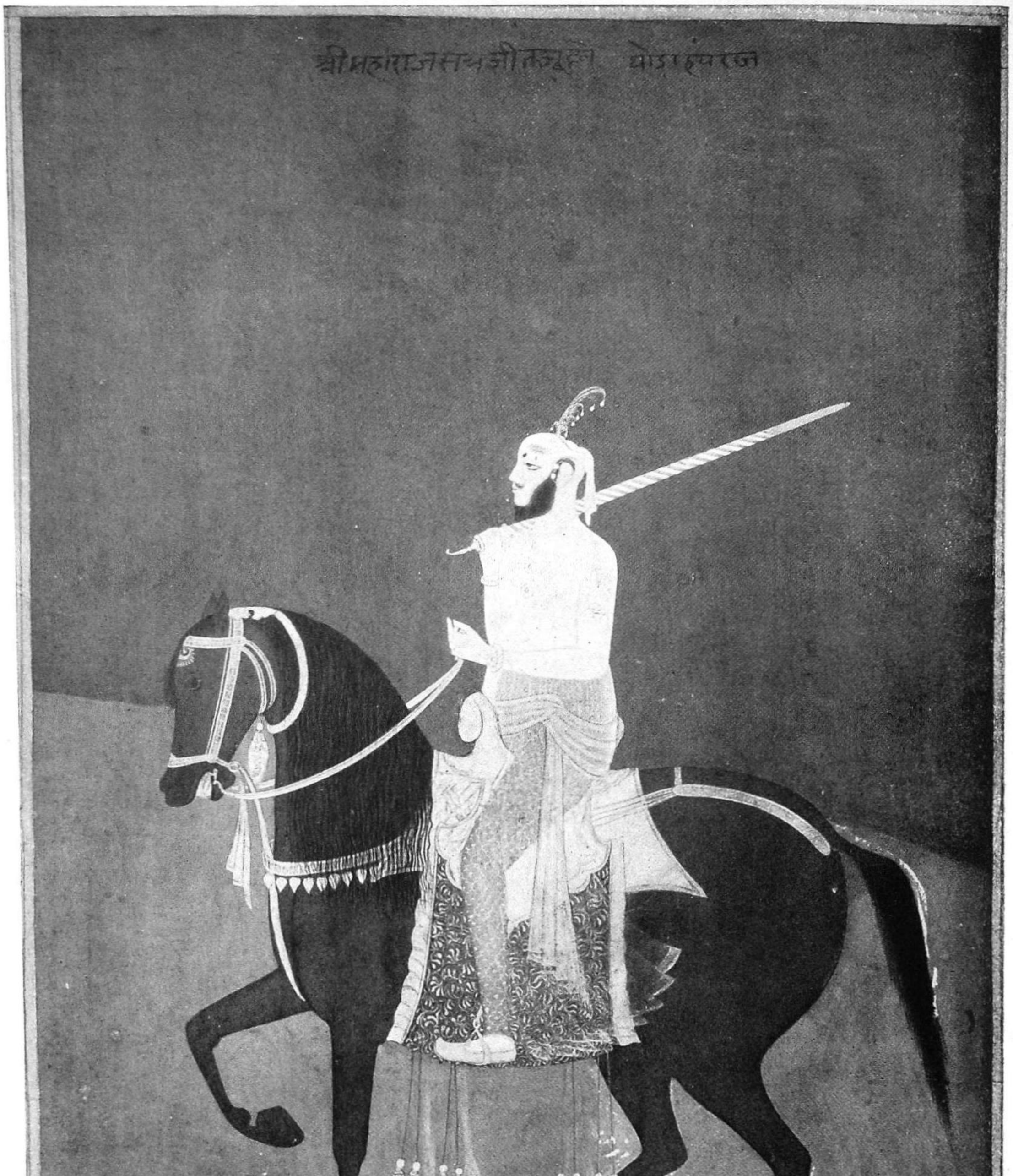

PLATE No. 14.
Mahārājā Shatrujit on horseback.

to the throne and one of the most gallant princes of the Datia State. He effectively combated the growing power of the Jats and the Marathas and even added to the territory he had inherited. He effectively intervened in a domestic quarrel in Orchha and secured 17 villages as a reward for his active help in installing Kunwar Dulāju, the adopted son of Raja Hathe Singh who died in 1768.

Later in 1800 A.D. he came into conflict with the forces of Daulat Rao Sindhia and fell fighting in action against the Sindhia army commanded by General Perron. Rao Shatrujit was succeeded by his only son Raja Parichhit by Rani Ānand Kunwari, daughter of the Pamār of Nanora, one of his six wives.

Shatrujit must have been a strikingly handsome person as will be seen from one of the finest portraits of his reproduced in plate No. 14. He appears to have been particularly fond of having himself painted, for a very large number of his portraits exists in the Datia collection. He must have been somewhat of a dandy, for he is always dressed with elaborate care and in an imposing fashion. His equestrian picture is one of the best portraits—Hindu or Moghul of this period. Shatrujit is seen seated on his favourite horse *Hayarāja* (the prince of horses) and carries a long sword on his right shoulder. The equestrian portrait came into vogue especially in the time of the emperor Farruksiyar; but there are not many examples which come upto the standard of the Datia painting.

I am able to reproduce another beautiful portrait of this splendid Bundela figure—Rao Satrajit (= Shatrujit)—by the courtesy of the Datia Darbar (plate No. 15). The face in profile with the Hindu mark of piety on the forehead and eyes slightly red is full of character and force. These pictures, while reminiscent of the Mughal school, have features of their own, especially in the warmer colour-tones and the mode of presentation, which is at once intimate and real. The Datia painters working at the end of 18th century seem to have happily blended their facile craftsmanship and inherited love for multi-

coloured ornament with the subtle characterisation of Mughal likenesses. Hindu portraiture of the 18th century, which is still to be studied, is not merely an echo of Mughal painting, but is in a class by itself. It is in some respects a summary of older pictorial traditions as modified and changed by alien influences, chiefly from Central Asia and Iran.

A large number of miscellaneous paintings was executed in a style quite distinct from the accepted schools of Moghul or Rajput art and several hundreds of paintings illustrating the *Rāgamālās*, the celebrated *Rasarāja* of Matiram composed about 1643 A.D. and the 700 verses of Bihari's Satsai bear testimony to the facile craftsmanship and fluid draftsmanship of the Datia painters. Nothing is however known of these painters except their works which are widely scattered in all the most important collections of Northern India. They are easily distinguished by their stereotyped figures, the arrangement of their composition and the simplicity of their colouring. They are remarkable not so much for their breadth of feeling or their accomplished technique, as for the transparent honesty and the facility of their work. The picture is usually a pictorial version of the lines of poetry written at the top on a background of yellow. The pictures are a kind of rapid cinematographic studies giving an imaginative version in line and colour of the abstract thoughts of Matiram or Keshavdas—the accomplished author of Rasika-Priyā—(composed in 1592 A.D.) or the abstract melodies of the Rāgamālās. The medieval *Hindi* poets loved to exercise their imagination on the subject of Erotics dealing with the various kinds of Lovers—Heroes and heroines and the various sentiments. The greatest writers were Bihari, Keshavdas and Matiram and these together furnished a very large amount of the subject-matter for the pictorial fancies of painters who worked at the various courts towards the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. It is always the love of Krishna and Rādhā which was taken as the staple for poetic and pictorial delineations.

PLATE NO. 15.
Mahārājā Shatrujit of Datia.

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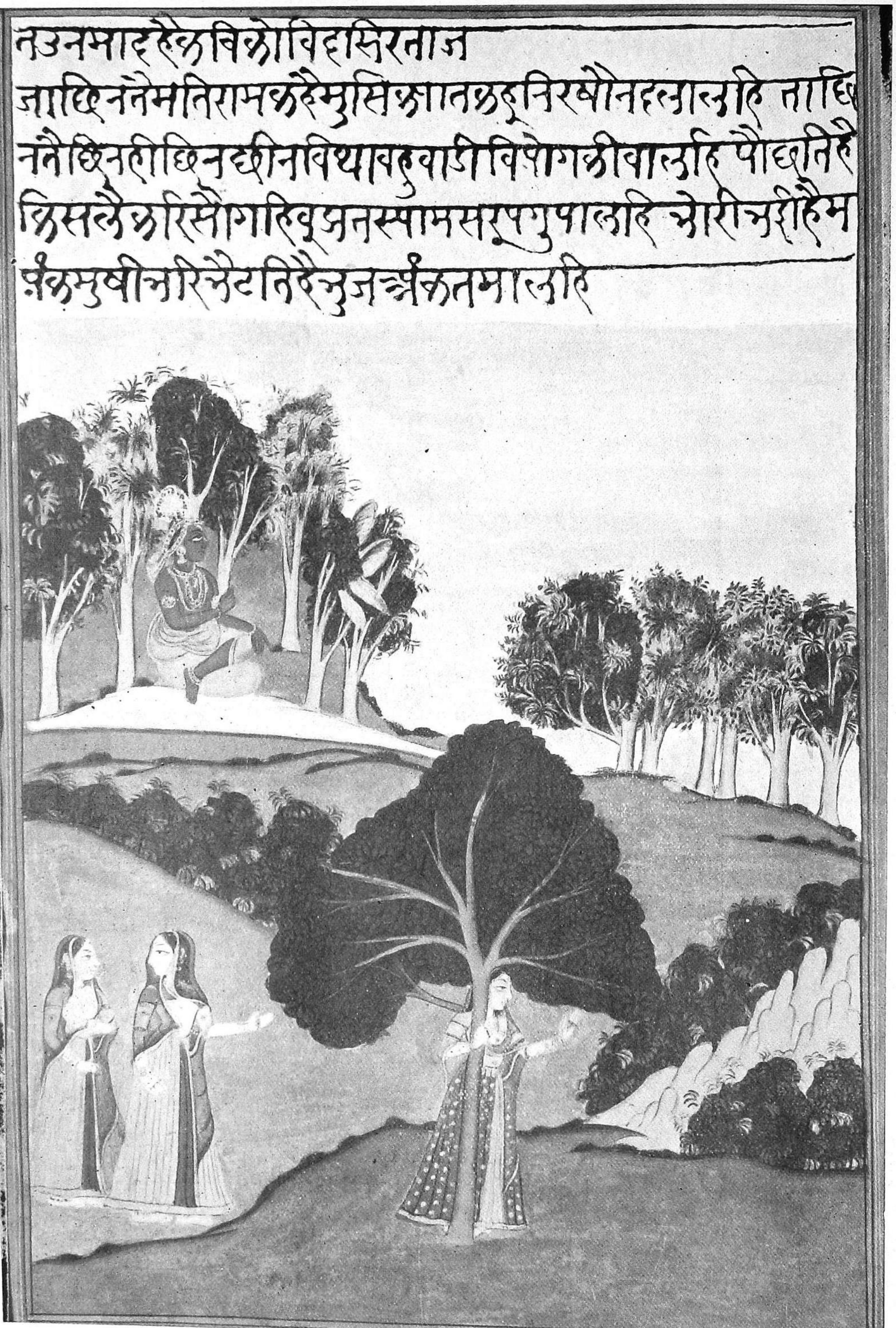


Plate No. 16.

A picture from Rasarāja.

In plate No. 16 Krishna is seated in a grove by himself while Rādhā is seen under a mango tree hesitating to take decision, whether to approach the beloved and to escape the pangs of separation or to go on suffering and keep her pride. The picture is to be seen and interpreted in two stages. The execution is of the simplest. It is an art primarily of direct narration and only secondarily concerned with purely aesthetic or even decorative considerations. On the top of the picture is a verse from the *Rasarāja* of Matirām.

उक्ति सखी की सखी से।

जा छिन तैं मतिराम कहै, मुसकात कहूं निरख्यौ नंदलाल हि ।
ता छिन तैं छिन हीं छिन, छीन विथा बहु बाढी वियोग की बालहि ।
पौंछति है किसलै करिसौं, गहि बूझत श्याम सरूप गुपालहि ।
भोरी भई है मयंकमुखी, भरि भैटति है भुज अंक तमालहि ॥ *

One of the attendants of Rādhā is telling a common friend shown in the left-hand corner of the picture) :—

The poet Matirām says that from the moment she has seen the son of Nanda *i.e.* Krishna smiling, she has been getting leaner every moment, for the pangs of separation have greatly increased in their agony. Thinking of the dark hue of Gopāla, she fans herself with a spray of blossoms. The good lady with her face like the moon embraces the *tāmalā* palm (mistaking it to be her dark-hued Beloved).

In plate No. 17 is reproduced a good specimen of the facile draftsmanship of the Datia school of painters. The picture is entitled Rāginī Gauri. These melody pictures must have originated sometime between the 15th and 16th centuries and came into vogue chiefly in the 17th and the 18th centuries. Every musical mode or *Rāga* has its peculiar Dhyāna or association of ideas, which are elaborately described in Sanskrit or Hindi verse, often of considerable poetic beauty and descriptive power.

* The condition described here is technically called "Unmāda" (= derangement)— the seventh of the nine stages of Love in separation dealt with by Matirām. It involves loss of memory and intelligent action.

These Dhyānas or chains of ideas are not to be found in old treatises on Indian music, nor is their peculiar significance always understood. All *Dhyānas* relate to certain divinities with their characteristic emblems or to the various kinds of Lovers (Nāyak-Nāyikābheda) described by Hindi writers on poetics. The Rāgamālā pictures are, in other words, pictorial interpretations of abstract melodies in terms of conventional images and stereotyped formulae.

To an Indian the world, animate and inanimate, is but an expression of the Divine and consequently there is always a sense of unity and natural harmony between the various parts of a Rajput composition. It also explains almost the complete absence of landscape painting in Indian art; for the whole universe to an Indian is like a variegated fabric of interdependent and mutually sympathetic strands. It is this amazing faculty of generalisation and imaginative perception of the unity underlying all creation, which is responsible for the artistic transmutation of such intangible things as seasonal variations and abstract melodies. Considered in this light the Rāgini or Bāramāsa (seasonal) pictures are not mere pictorial phantasies, sometimes of faultless line and palpitating colour, but constitute a veritable *tour de force* of imaginative interpretation in the art-history of the world. Really good Rāgini pictures are rare and it is not always easy to trace the exact kinship between melodies and their pictorial representations. On the other hand the pictures representing the various seasons (Bāramāsa)—especially the months of spring and the monsoon are generally simpler, more effective and direct.

Aesthetically speaking, the Bundela school of painting which includes the pictorial dialects of Datia and Orchha—offshoots of the same parent stock, is not of outstanding importance in the history of Indian painting. The Datia productions are certainly superior to the Orchha pictures, which were first published by Coomarswamy. Excepting a few portraits in the Datia and the Orchha collections, which are to be directly

PLATE NO. 17.
Rāgini Gauri.

derived from the Moghul school of painting, modified no doubt by influences of time and place, and a very few Rāgini pictures, the prolific output of the Bundela painters consisting of hundreds of paintings of Rāgamālās, Rasarāj and the Satsai must be considered as pretty illustration rather than classed in the category of creative art. The Bundela painter was particularly weak in design and deficient in imagination, especially as regards the types of men and women—heroes and heroines, whom he introduced as actors in the pictorial dramas of Hindi classics, dressed in garments of standard patterns and simple colours.

V

THE COURT-ART OF TEHRI-GARHWAL

THE small State of Tehri-Garhwal, lying within the inaccessible recesses of the Himalayas and containing within its boundaries the sources of the sacred Jamuna and the Bhagirathi, occupies a place of special distinction in the annals of Indian Painting. It makes its bow on the stage of Indian history during the early years of the reign of Aurangzeb. Suleman Shikoh, the handsome and spirited son of Dārā, had sought refuge at the court of Raja Prithwi Shāh in August 1658 A.D. The Raja "repaired the old and ruined palace of his ancestors, lodged the prince in it and day and night served him attentively;" for he considered the arrival of such a prince as a divine grace. He went even so far as to give his daughter to the refugee prince. * But old Prithwi Shah had counted without his host. Aurangzeb was free at the end of the year to turn his attention to the last of his surviving rivals and set himself to work with his accustomed thoroughness. Prithwi Shah is unjustly accused of having broken the traditional rules of Rajput hospitality and of having surrendered Suleman Shikoh, who had solemnly been promised a safe asylum. The fact is that the old Raja was over-ruled by his son Medini Shah, whose scruples were over-borne by the blandishments of the wily emperor and the unfortunate prince was as a result handed over on the 27th of December 1660 to Kunwar Ram Singh, son of Mirza Jai Singh of Amber.

Among the entourage of Suleman Shikoh which followed him to the court of Garhwal were the painters—Shyam Dās † and

* See History of Aurangzeb by Jadunath Sarkar, Vol. II, Ch. 22. This is repudiated by the House of Tehri as baseless.

† A picture ascribed to him is the collection of B. Sitarām Sāhu of Benares.

his son Hardās. Molā Rām (1760-1833) was the great grandson of Har Dās and has hitherto been the solitary name known in the history of, what is at present known for want of a more accurate or satisfactory terminology, Rajput painting. By caste a goldsmith, he appears to have enjoyed a considerable amount of patronage at the court of Tehri-Garhwal; for he was given an estate of 60 villages with a daily allowance of Rs. 5 by the ruling prince. His first patron and friend was the feeble Jaikrit Shah, who was soon supplanted by his younger brother Pradyumanchand, who had been placed on the throne of Kumayun in 1772 by his father Lalāt Shah. The house of Tehri passed through a series of misfortunes, culminating in the conquest of Garhwal by the Nepalese forces and the death of Pradyuman himself at the battle of Kharbara, near Dehra, in January 1804. The Gurkhas ruled Garhwal with a rod of iron for a period of eleven years and the 'country fell into a lamentable decay;' and it is said that no less than 2 lakhs of people were sold as slaves from this sparsely populated territory which numbered its inhabitants a little over 3 lakhs even in 1921.

The Nepalese were expelled from Garhwal in 1815 A.D. by the British and Raja Sudarshan Shah was given the territory now designated as the State of Tehri-Garhwal. Sudarshan Shāh (died 1859) was a pious Hindu and a generous patron of art and literature, and it was at his court that Molā Rām and his colleagues Māṇakū and Chaitu were employed in making the pictorial translations of the great Hindu classics and rendering the stirring episodes of the epics and the Puranas through the medium of line and colour.* About Molā Rām Coomarswamy has rightly remarked that the painter has attained rather fictitious importance owing to the fact that his has been almost the only name of a Pahari painter hitherto known. There cannot be the least doubt that a large number of paintings and drawings

* Sudarshan Shah was himself something of an author. He has left his memoirs written in the Pahari dialect, which would be of considerable interest and importance for the history of Northern India, and it is hoped that they will be published by the present Mahārājā of Tehri.

of the late 18th and early 19th centuries especially of the Pahari *qalam* has been wrongly ascribed to Molā Rām. The great-grandson of Molā Rām—Bālak Rām is still alive and was good enough to send a number of sketches for the All India Art Exhibition at Lucknow (1925 January); practically all of which were absolutely worthless and altogether unworthy of being attributed to his illustrious ancestor. It is not possible in the present state of our knowledge to decide exactly the status of Molā Rām amongst Rajput painters or to appraise his contribution to Indian art without further researches in the archives of the Tehri State. It is very much to be hoped that the enlightened ruler of Tehri, His Highness Mahārājā Narendra Shāh, will find it possible to make his pictorial treasures more accessible to students of Indian art by means of adequate reproductions thereof.

I came across the name of Māṇakū while examining an album of paintings lent to me by His Highness the Maharaja of Tehri. The painter introduces himself in a Sanskrit verse written at the top of rather an inferior painting depicting Krishna and Rādhā sitting on a balcony overlooking a garden. The verse runs as follows:—

Muni-vasu-giri-somaih sammite Vikramābde
guṇa-gaṇita-garishṭā Mālinī-vṛitta-vittā
Vyarachayad-aja-bhaktā Māṇakū-chitrakartrā
Lalita-lipi-vichitram Gītagovindachitram

The meaning of the verse is not altogether clear. The sense of it is that in Vikram Samvat 1887 (=1830 A.D.) Aja-Bhaktā (literally meaning a devotee of Vishnu, the immortal)—the florist, famous for her character and celebrated for her accomplishments got the painter Māṇakū to 'compose' the illustrated 'Gita-Govinda'—varied and elegant in style. It is not possible to say definitely whether Aja-Bhaktā is a proper name or not. What is however plain is that the artist was inspired by a lady of distinction to 'compose' as he calls it, his pictorial version of Jaideva's celebrated masterpiece. If a conjecture be allowed, I

should think that the lady referred to in the verse given above is probably some royal benefactress of the house of Tehri, and in that case it is possible that the word '*Mālinī*' may refer to a place-name in Garhwal.* I should also mention here that the word '*giri*' sometimes means seven; though there cannot be the least doubt about the word to mean the numeral 'eight' in the present case. The use of the word '*Mālinī*' which is the name of a well-known Sanskrit metre, in which the present verse is composed, is responsible for producing what is called in Sanskrit poetics *Mudrā-alankār.*

Beyond the facts given in the verse quoted above nothing is known about the life of Māṇaku, which is a common name among the goldsmiths of Garhwal, who call themselves Tomar Rajputs.

If our knowledge of Māṇaku's life is confined to a single and somewhat obscure biographical verse, our information about Chaitu is almost next to nothing. We know nothing at all beyond the name of the artist. The picture entitled "the Rape of Yādava women" reproduced in plate No. 18 is signed by the artist, as are a few other paintings in the collection of Mr. P. C. Manuk of Bankipore and the Bhārat Kalā Parishad of Benares. A close study of the pictures—of the style, colouring and draughtsmanship—leaves no doubt as to the identity of the artist and also about his being a contemporary of Māṇaku and Mola Ram. It should be mentioned that the art of painting at the court of Tehri appears to have died out with the death of its great patron Sudarshan Shāh.

There is a complete series of pictures illustrating the well-known Puranic episode of *Rukmiṇi-Pariṇaya,* (the wedding of Rukmiṇī) which appears to have been executed when the artist was still feeling his way in his profession or working for some less exalted patron than the ruling house of Tehri; for every thing including paper, pigment and the album in which the

* L. R. Vaidya's Sanskrit Lexicon gives one of the meanings of Mālinī to be the town of Champā. I am told that there was a celebrated place of that name in Almora, which was originally a part of the kingdom of Garhwal.

PLATE NO. 18.

The Rape of Yādava Women.

pictures are pasted—is inferior and sometimes even crude. It is possible to make up from the pictures in the collections of Mr. Manuk and the Bhārat Kalā Parishad an almost complete illustrated version of the celebrated story of "the Immolation of Sati"—the consort of the Great Mahādeva. These pictures are greatly superior to the series of Rukmiṇī pictures and exhibit all the characteristic peculiarities of Chaitu's art. There is, however, a close and general similarity in technique—especially in drawing and in the simple colour-schemes—throughout Chaitu's pictures. Chaitu (literally born in the month of Chait)—also a *Sunār* name, relies on the supple curves of his drawing, which is always accomplished and never fails to charm, rather than on the brilliancy of his hues. On the reverse of the picture reproduced in plate No. 18 is a complete sketch of a complicated scene, which gives an idea of the artist's superb mastery over line. Unlike Māṇakū he paints his figures in simple colours, not infrequently white with a judicious distribution of glowing patches, usually associated with Pahāri painting. He rarely attempts to elaborate his background and usually contents himself by merely suggesting the atmosphere of the scene he is painting. He concentrates his attention on the human figures of the drama, who are drawn with natural ease and absolute detachment. There is a total absence of self-consciousness which is so conspicuous a feature of modern Indian art. Chaitu, Pahāri though he is, appears to have been unlike his great contemporary Māṇakū almost wholly unaffected by the glorious landscape of the Himalayan ridges and the majestic currents of the Jamuna and the Ganges.

Chaitu appears to have been a prolific artist; for besides the series of illustrations of *Rukmiṇi-Pariṇaya,* and the immolation of Satī, the daughter of Daksha, he has left a number of pictures depicting scenes from the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārat. These latter belong to the period of his artistic maturity of which an illustration is given in plate No. 18.

"The Rape of Yādava women" depicts the tragic episode

when Yādava fortunes had sunk so low that even the might of the great Arjuna proved unavailing to protect the highborn ladies from the rude clutches of the forest tribes. Lord Shri Krishna had passed away after having fulfilled his rôle on the stage of life. Arjuna had gone to Dwārkā with a view to fetch the women-folk of his great friend and preceptor to the Pāndava capital at Indraprastha. On the way Arjuna was attacked by roving bands of gipsy tribes who are seen in the picture carrying away the women-folk entrusted to his charge. The Pāndava hero is seen in the centre with the outstretched bow—the famous *Gāndiva* which had lost its force. The women behind him are looking on with a feeling of stupefied amazement. A number of the *Yādava* damsels have so far forgotten themselves as to be following their captors in an acquiescent spirit and bowing to the inevitable. *

Chaitu's partiality for spotless white and his reliance on the quality of his line, which suffices to sound the whole gamut of varying emotions and divergent action are specially noticeable. The decorative element is held in fine subordination to the principal action of the picture; and instead of putting on a label to show the noble birth of the central figure, the artist has painted him bigger than everybody else in the picture. It is an art of definite conventions and certain limitations; but within its own range supreme in its sincerity and refinement.

In another scene from the Rāmāyana (see plate No. 19) Rāma, Lakshmana and Sītā are seen leaving the capital to dwell in the forest in obedience to the command of King Dasharatha. The background is painted with the same simplicity in yellowish-green as in the picture given above. White, yellow and red are the predominant pigments. Chaitu's strength lies in his treatment of feminine draperies which impart varying emotions to their beautiful wearers as they trail along.

One more example of his art in a different vein is the picture Dāna Līlā (plate No. 20) which is undoubtedly by Chaitu;

* See Coomarswamy's myths of the Hindus and Buddhists, pages 242-244.

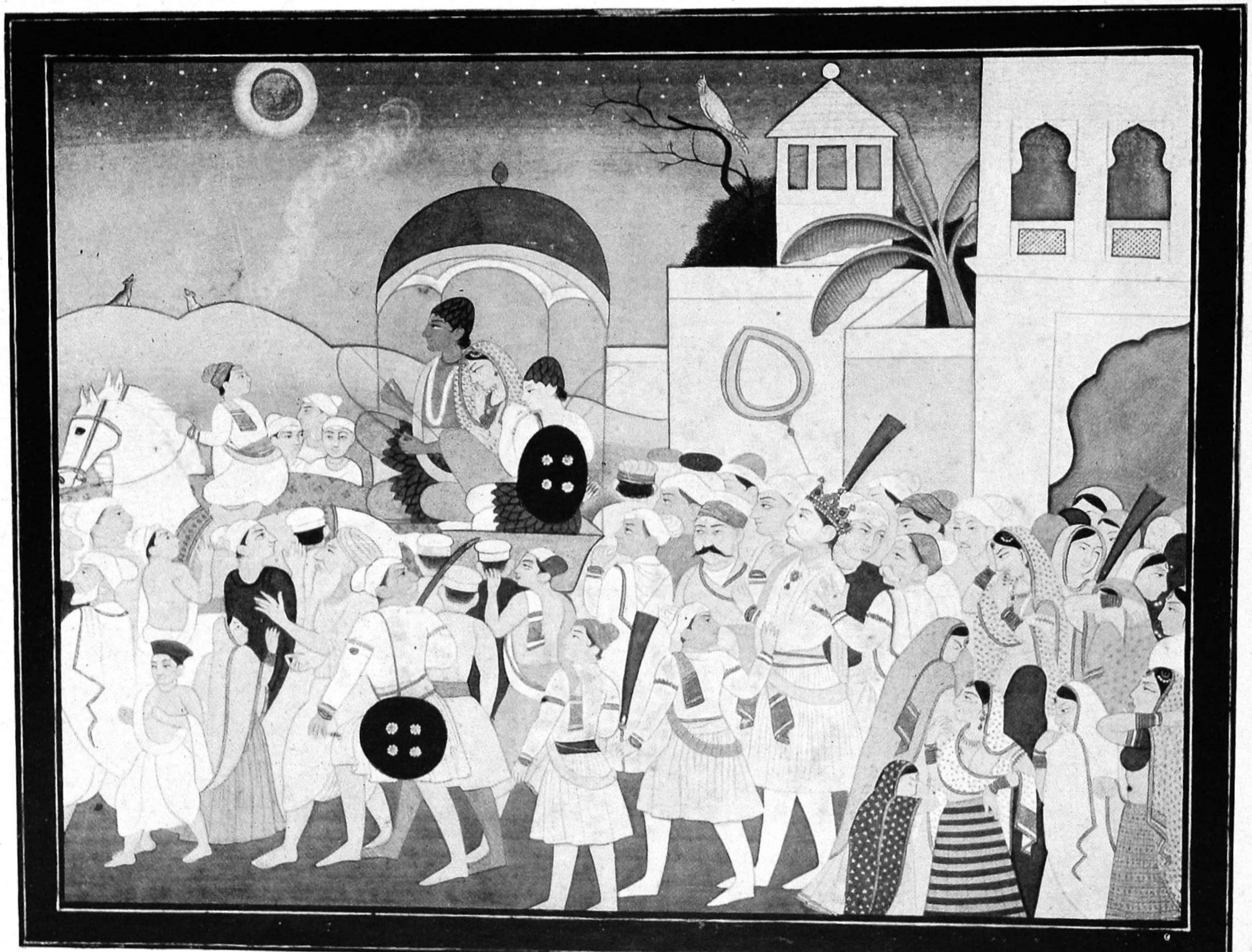


PLATE No. 19.

Rāma's Departure,

GOVERNMENT MUSEUM
27 MAR 1944
MADRAS

Plate No. 20.

Dāna-Līlā.

for all his characteristic traits are there—fine drawing, subdued colour-tones, the plain background, the human types and the animated draperies. The picture is painted in a lyrical mood, depicting young Shri Krishna claiming his toll from the milk-maid of Gokul carrying the jars of sour milk in a basket poised on the head. It is in scenes like this that the Pahari artists are in their true element and they lavish all the wealth of their palette with the love and piety of the devout Vaishnavas and even *abandon* of the ballad-singers. The Gopi is thrilled by the impudent touch of the divine cow-herd and there is almost a pause, albeit involuntary and unconscious, in shaking herself free from the grasp of the beloved Lord. The face in profile, looking down with fine angular eyes, is drawn with consummate reserve and profound knowledge of human emotions. The Bhāgawat Purān or Shrimad Bhāgwat—the life history of Shri Krishna—is the gospel of popular Vaishnavism and the inexhaustible repertory of Hindu painting.

Though there is but one picture which is actually signed by the artist and is reproduced in coloured plate No. 21, the technical mannerisms and stylistic idiosyncrasies furnish a perfectly clear guide as to the identity of the painter, especially when we are dealing with a series of pictures illustrating some well-known Hindi or Sanskrit classic. The picture entitled "Blindman's buff" is signed on the reverse 'painted by Mānak' (Mānak ki likhi). It is one of the finest and most characteristic of Mānaku's creations and depicts Krishna and his cow-herd companions playing a game of hide-and-seek on a full-moon night along the verdant banks of the Jamuna. Mānaku is essentially a landscape-painter and revels in the sumptuousness of his warm colour-schemes. There is a veritable riot of colours, which sometimes helps to cover up a certain weakness of draughtsmanship. Young Krishna, with the peacock feather in his cap and the long pendulous garland of white jasmine flowers, is seated in the centre, blind-folded while his rustic companions are running away to hide themselves. The figures are painted

against a background of golden prominence along the slopes of which are rising the stately trees of the Himalayan landscape entwined by flowering lianas. Landscape painting by itself is practically non-existent so far as Indian art is concerned; for the Indian artist never conceived of any sharp lines of demarkation between the world of Man and the world of surrounding Nature. Consequently landscape painting is merely treated as a natural setting for human emotions and activities and nowhere has it been treated with greater charm and beauty than by the Pahāri painters, who painted what they actually felt and lived, amidst the glories of their Himalayan retreats. It was left for the Chinese and Japanese artists to see the divine touch in the simplest of flowers and the commonest of animals; and landscape painting by Pahāri artists, though pretty it always is, lacks that spark of life which only these Far Eastern artists alone among the world of painters knew how to breathe.

Besides 'composing' the whole of Gita-Govinda in several scores of paintings Mānaku appears to have essayed the pictorial translation of the couplets of the great Hindi poet Bihari and painted various episodes from the epics and the Puranas. His technique often shows clear indications of European influence, especially in the treatment of light and shade. This is specially so in the picture illustrating the wedding of Rāma and his brothers. The composition is somewhat crowded and the marriage party is shown cooped up outside the house in a triangle, with two large red banners flying and the musicians perched on an eminence vigorously blowing their long pipes and energetically beating their drums. Inside the court-yard the figures are seen silhouetted in the flickering light of the customary oil-fed torches. The picture affords us an intimate glimpse of the social life and customs of the Hindu acristocracy living in the early years of the 19th century.

Mānaku is more successful in dealing with a simple situation and a limited theme or when he is interpreting some charming lines from Bihari or Mati Ram. He poses his figures

Plate No. 21
Blindman's Buff.

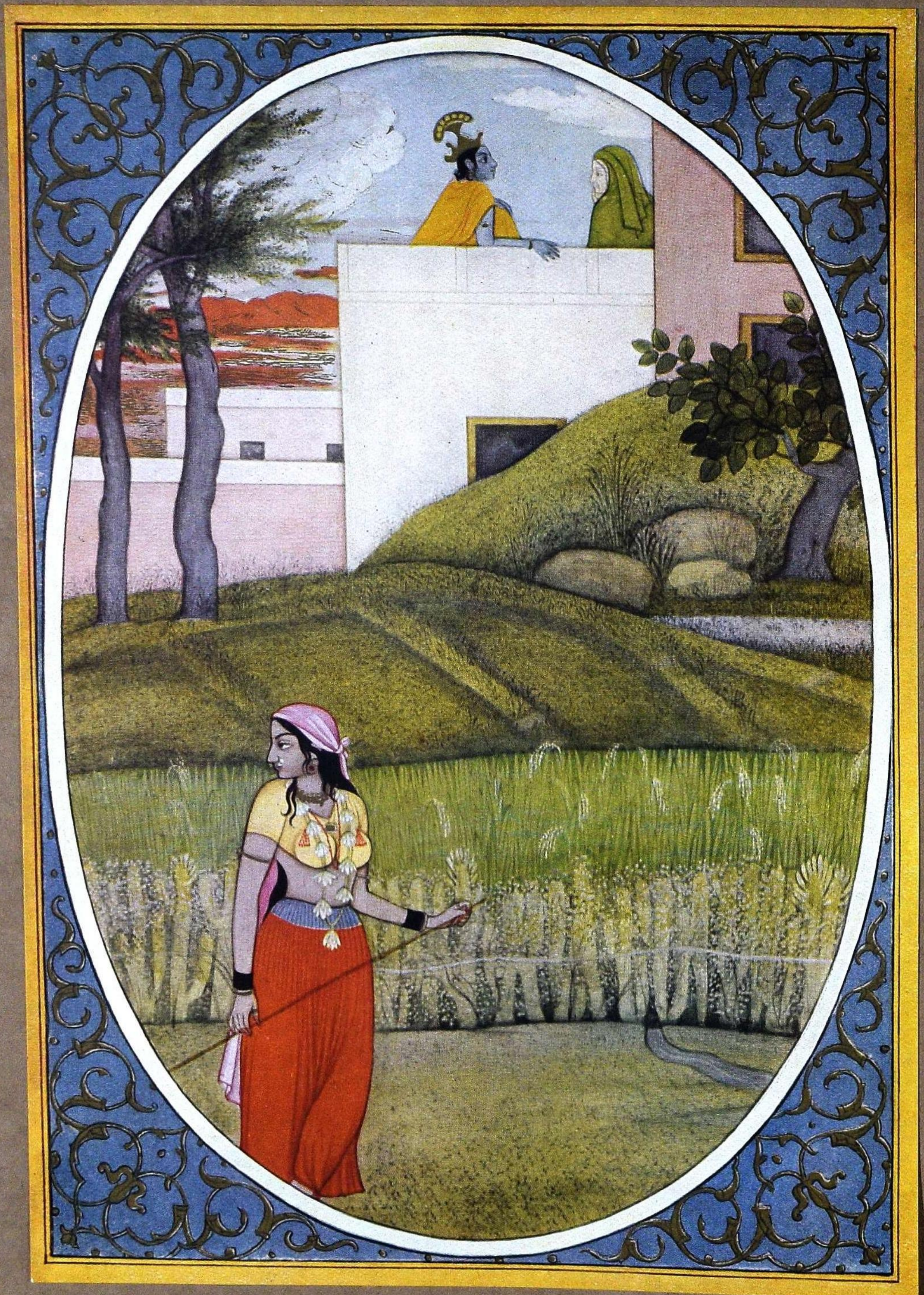


Plate No. 22
The Village Beauty.

with great taste and refinement against beautifully painted backgrounds of the Himalayan hills with their tapering pines and blossoming creepers. A few words by way of comment and description on a very original and remarkable painting of his, which I call 'the Village Beauty' may be useful (see colour plate No. 22). This is a picture measuring only 7·8 inches by 5·5 inches. A young woman is shown standing amidst terraced fields of luscious crops with a long pole in the hand possibly grazing a herd of cattle. Krishna, very indifferently painted, is seen conversing with an elderly lady on the open terrace of her house, as the skies are turning crimson with the setting sun. The village maid is dressed in a simple skirt of red with bluish facings at the waist and the usual tight-fitting *choli* (bodice). A bangle with a black wrist-band on either arm, a ruby in the ear, a flower garland and a chain of gold round the neck, a pearl nose-ring and a saffron mark on the forehead complete the toilet of the lady. A rose-coloured scarf is prettily wound round the head with its ends trailling beyond the knees. Mānaku has succeeded in producing a delightful and original study of pastoral costume, at once beautiful by its charming simplicity and complete adequateness.

The fly-leaf of the picture has the following verses inscribed on it from Behari's Satsaiya (see Grierson's Edition, Nos. 350, 454, 533, 176, 260 and 274). The verses need not be transcribed here, for they bear no relation whatever to the picture as is often the case in Rajput paintings purporting to be illustrations of well-known literary works. In fact, real book illustration is rarely met with in Indian art after the time of Akbar. The nearest example of the Indian illustrator's art is the famous *Razmanāmā* of Jaipur. Rajput painting, on the other hand, is more akin to the art of literary composition—a kind of pictorial interpretation rather than mere embellishment of poetic themes. It was left to Persia to specialise in real illustrations of singular daintiness. One or two pictures from the Gita-Govinda will suffice to give an idea of the art of the pictorial 'composer' as

Mānaku styles himself. I shall only describe the picture of the opening verse of Jayadeva's masterpiece. Krishna's foster-father, Nanda, the old herdsman of Gokul, tells Rādhā to accompany Krishna to his home as he is afraid of going alone at night; for the sky is over-cast with threatening clouds and the groves are dark with the shadows of sombre palms. The last of the cows is still being milked, while the rest of them are already in their pens. Old Nanda dressed more like a Mogul courtier than an uncouth herdsman solemnly gives instructions to Rādhā while Krishna is looking gauche and silent. The landscape is painted black while the figures in the scene are lit up by torch-light. Mānaku, pious Hindu as he was, loved his cows, which are always painted with real affection and intimate knowledge. He excels in painting night-scenes with their sharp contrasts of light and shade, and there are several good examples of the kind where his mastery of brilliant tones is effectively set off against a sombre back-ground. (See plate No. 24.)

The Pahāri artist copied Nature as he saw it, and consequently the Jamuna which he painted was not the stately river flowing past the level plains of *Braj*, but a tempestuous stream swiftly coursing down its mountainous slopes and winding through scenes of verdant glory. In fact not infrequently the scenery is artistically more arresting in Mānaku's pictures than the doings of his *dramatic personœ*. It should, however, be noted that the Pahāri artist appears to have been entirely unaffected by the sight of snow; for so far as I am aware not a single picture is known in which the Pahāri artist has tried to render the magnificent scenes that are daily enacted on the snow-clad peaks of the Himālayas at the rising and the setting of the sun. Is it because the artists, poets though they were, never broke through the traditional chains of their expression and allowed their minds to roam freely along the wonderful vista of mountain-scenery with its infinitely varied and inexhaustible play of light? The Pahāri landscape, notwithstanding its undoubted charm and beauty,

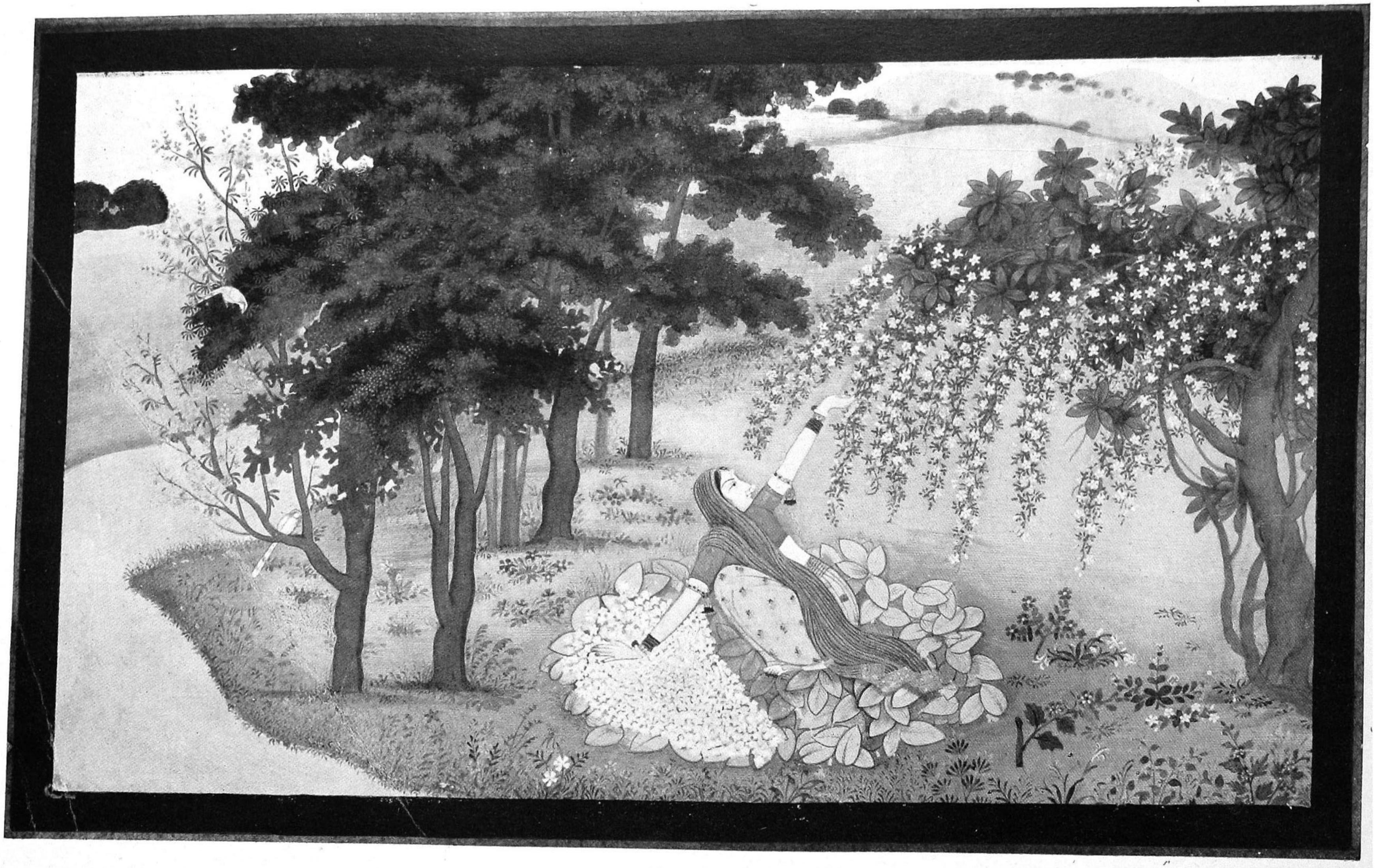


PLATE NO. 23.

The Couch of Love (Gita-Govinda).

gives an impression of stereotyped convention and a certain amount of wooden formality, simply because, as one feels, the artist's vision failed to catch the divine harmonies of light and colour that played incessantly round his familiar and possibly, on that very account, unobserved mountains. The extraordinary variety of mountain-lines and arboreal form appears to have left the Pahāri painter unimpressed, who never went beyond the repetition of set formulæ and conventional patterns. The inadequacy of Pahāri landscape is felt the more vividly, as one witnesses the wonderful place amidst which the artists worked and when one considers what they could have done with their supple draughtsmanship and natural felicity of colour-designs in interpreting the most impressive of all natural phenomena. The wanton play of water leaping from stone to stone and from hill to hill, till it issued in the form of a bubbling rivulet or a raging torrent has also not been attempted by the Pahāri painter. Is it because the Hindu artist never experienced the independence of a creative artist on account of his comparatively subordinate position in the official hierarchy of the state he served; for be it remembered that the painter like the musician and unlike the poet had but a minor status in Hindu courts at least from the days of Kauṭilya? It must be said to the credit of the Moghuls that the painter was given a rank worthy of his craft; for self-respect is the first essential of noble creation.

As will be expected, there is a great deal of repetition and even a certain amount of flatness which are inevitable when the artist is playing the same note in varying modes. It is always love and insatiable love—the eternal quest for the Divine which is the principal theme. It is sometimes a picture of Rādhā preparing the leafy-couch of love along the banks of the Kālindī (see plate No. 23), where every collection of trees is a grove and where every tree is embraced by loving climbers. It is occasionally a meeting in some secluded grove along the river-bank during the still hours of the night, when the silence and

the solitude of the scene are only broken by the speechless whispers of the beloved pair. * (Plate No. 24.)

In plate No. 25 we have a picture of a domestic scene exquisite in drawing, faultless in taste and charming in simplicity. A lady dressed in white—perhaps Yashodā—the foster-mother of Shri Krishna, is seen cooking with all the customary utensils characteristic of the Indian kitchen lying in disorder; while Krishna is seen talking to a village-maid under the hospitable shade of a tree. The scene is treated architecturally and a section of the house with the landscape beyond is shown as it where to the auditorium. The plantain stems just beyond the wall furnish the touch of intimacy with the typical life of rural India. Plate No. 26 deals with a lighter theme, in which the rose-bud tossed in the air furnishes the occasion for a little frivolity. Western art influences are obviously visible not only in the general treatment of the landscape but even in the detailed delineation of circular, tapering, churchlike spires. The figure of Krishna is better drawn than is the case in many a painting by Māṇaku. The simple architectural background of the picture is especially to be noted; while it is superfluous to say anything about the exquisite figure of Rādhā, who has just flung the flower in the air with her henna-stained fingers. While there is nothing positive to ascertain the authorship of these pictures, I am inclined to attribute them to Māṇaku on the strength of the general resemblance in technique as well as of association in the same album, all the pictures of which appear to be from the same brush.

Though both Chaitu and Mānaku derive their inspiration from the same sources, their methods of expression are somewhat different. Chaitu is primarily a draughtsman seeking to convey his message through the quality of his unobtrusive line while

* An earlier version of the Gita-Govinda said to be executed at Basholi in the Kashmir State was recently exhibited by Mr. Ajit Ghosh at the 2nd Lucknow Art Exhibition. The pictures are æsthetically inferior to the Tehri paintings, but seem to belong to the first half of the 17th century. I have seen other Pahāri versions of the Gita-Govinda, none of which however reaches the standard of the Tehri School.

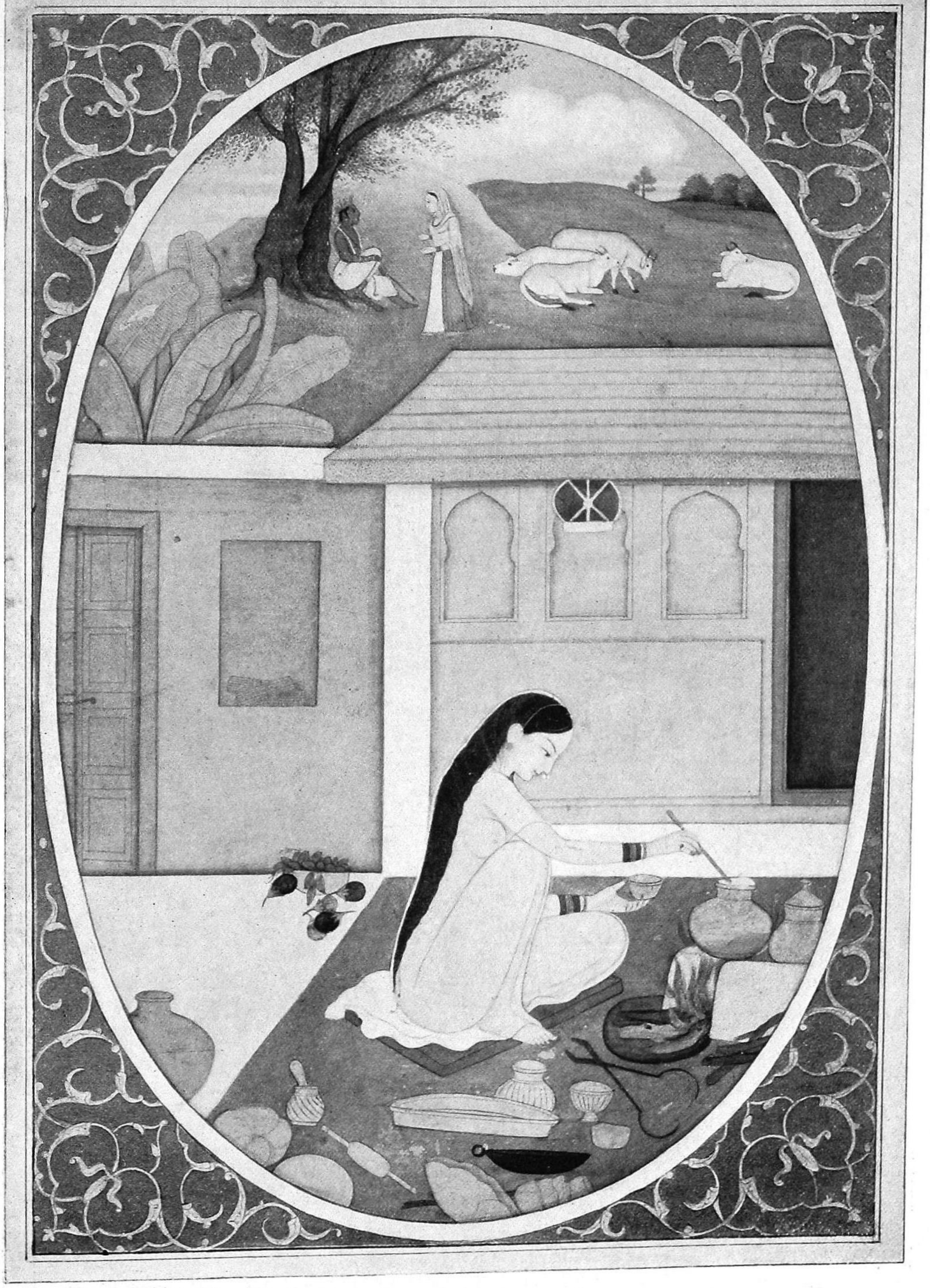


PLATE NO. 25.

In the Kitchen.

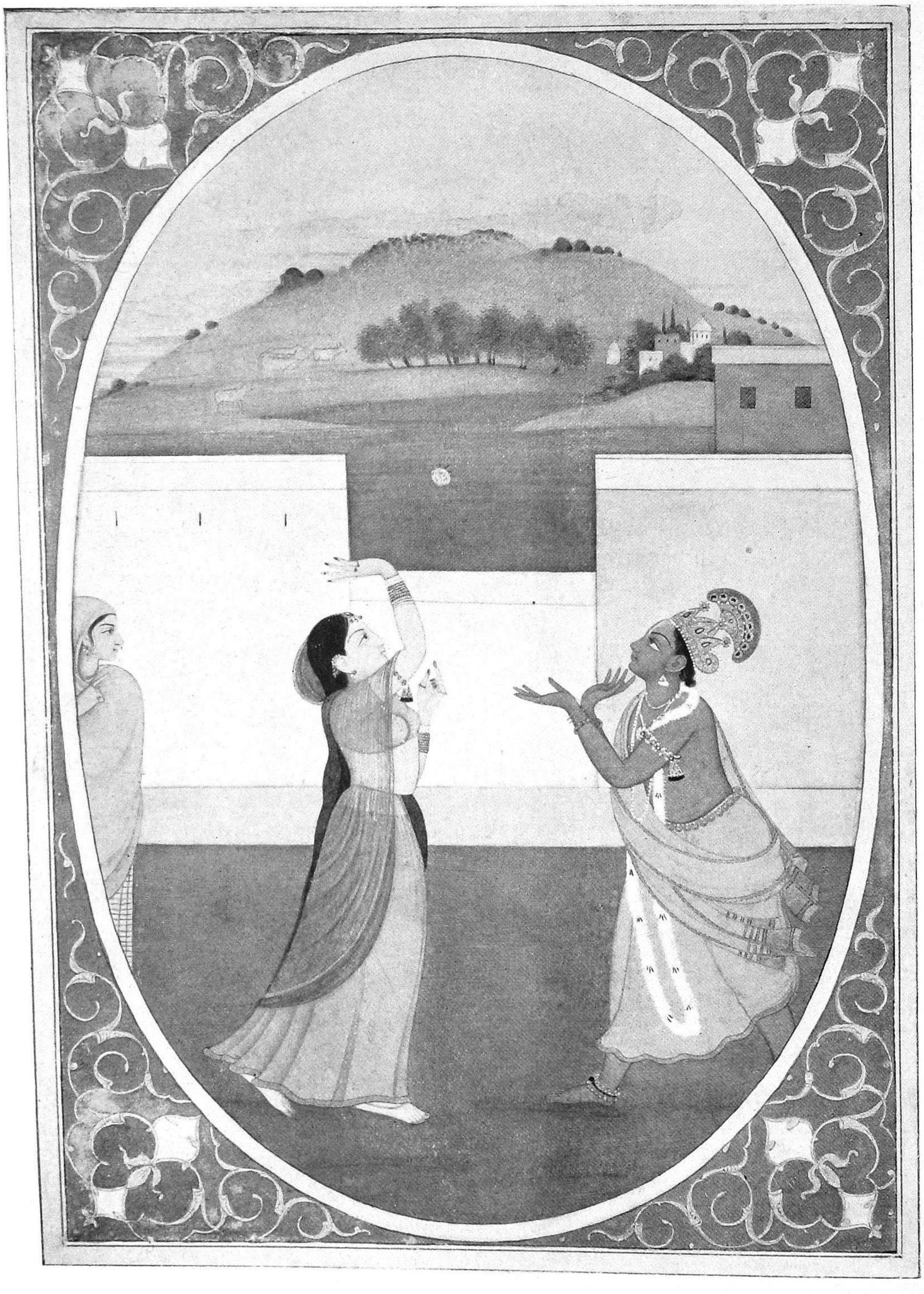


PLATE NO. 26.

Flirtation.

Mānaku, more conscious, is above all a colourist, who uses all the brilliant resources of his palette for putting up a scene on a dazzling stage of glowing tints against the hinterland of Himālayan landscapes. We know too little about the authentic works of Molā Rām to institute any fruitful comparison between him and his fellow-workers at the court of Tehri. It is certain, however, that the court painters of Sudarshan Shah must be assigned a place of considerable distinction in the history of Hindu painting of the late 18th and the 1st half of the 19th century.

The generous patronage of art at the court of Tehri was not an isolated phenomenon, but the culmination of a general outburst of artistic activity, which affected the courts of all the best known Hindu principalities of Rajputana, Central India, the Punjab and Kashmir. Moghul painting was in full decline sometime before the death of Aurangzeb and may be said to have definitely ceased to exist as a separate school after Farruksiyar. It is surprising that the Hindu art should have blossomed as it did, at a time when the country was passing through a series of acute political crises and when the flood-gates of an alien civilisation were being slowly and visibly opened. Hindu painting achieved its greatest triumphs at the court of Sawai Jai Singh II (1668-1743)—the founder of modern Jaipur. It was during the reign of this versatile prince—the author of the well-known astronomical tables named after the Moghul emperor Muhammad Shah, that great masterpieces like the *Rāsamandal* and *Govardhandharana* and the life-size portraits of the Jaipur sovereigns were painted. A large number of paintings of the Deccan school mixed in style is known to have been executed at the Moslem court of Hyderabad and the Maratha capital at Poona.* The artistic renaissance was in fact general. It is said about Iran that her most fruitful epochs of literary and artistic activity synchronise with the periods of her greatest travail and anarchy. Something

* See the history of the Marathas by Kincaid and Parasnis, Vol. III. Some beautiful portraits of Peshwas—above all the great Nānā Fadnavis—the Pandit Pradhān Peshwa are reproduced for the first time.

of the sort happened in India between the death of the last of the great Moghuls in 1707 and the absorption of the East India Company into Government by the Crown in 1857. Besides the great states of Kashmir, Patiala, Jaipur, Udaipur, Bikaner, the smaller states of Kangra, Chamba, Nurpur, Punch and Mandi in the Punjab; Datia and Orchha in Central India, Alwar, Bharatpur and Kishengarh in Rajputana afforded generous patronage to the art of painting. Maharaja Bannu Singh of Alwar (1824-1857) was a great patron of art. But excluding Jaipur the finest work was done at the court of Tehri-Garhwal.

A word may here be said about the importance of State patronage on the development of Hindu painting. Rajput painting is sometimes contrasted with Moghul art on the ground that the former though 'kept alive by the support of Rajput princes', 'lived or flourished on the staple foundation of wide-spread and highly organised religious ideas which grew out of the soil of Hindustan, *independent of any courtly or princely support.*'* This, in my opinion, is altogether unwarranted by the existing data. The facts appear to be quite the reverse. Hindu painting reached its zenith everywhere under the fostering care of royal courts and with its disappearance the art also languished. In fact in the history of Hindu painting there was an early differentiation between patronage-art and the art which exclusively attached itself to temple-building. The former developed into miniature painting, the earliest remnants of which are found in the manuscripts of the Jaina Kalpasutras. It was partly secular and partly religious, cultivated as a pastime and an accomplishment at the courts of princes and noblemen; and references to it abound in the classical Sanskrit literature from Bhāsa, Guṇādhya and Kālidāsa to Bhavabhūti and Somadeva. The art of temple-work is witnessed in the immortal frescoes of Ajanta and Bāgh, Sigiriya and Sittānvasal. It is true, however, that 'the Rajput princes shared with the common people their

* See the editorial notes of Rupam Nos. 15 and 16, page 105.

beliefs in the religious ideas—which are the real inspirators of Rajput art.' The difference therefore between Moghul art and Rajput art lies not in their difference of clientèle but of ideas and outlook. *

* *Note.*—I prefer the term Hindu to what Coomarswamy calls Rajput painting, as it fixes the attention more on the cultural and religious forces which inspired and moulded its peculiar development while the word 'Rajput' refers more to the source of patronage. Hindu painting can be sub-divided into various classes such as Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jaina,. etc. The parallel classification on the basis of locality is also sometimes useful to indicate the peculiarities of local schools, such as Kangra *qalam*, Jammu, Garhwali and others.

VI

A PICTURE BY ABUL HASAN NĀDIR-UZ-ZAMĀN

THIS exquisite picture is signed by the greatest painter of Jahangir's time, Abul Hasan, son of the celebrated Persian artist Āqa Razā of Herat. Though Jahangir does not think much of the father, he was the pupil of the famous calligraphist Mulla Mir Ali of Herat and executed some very fine work; although he (Aqā) was "renowned more for his copies of old masters than for any original work." (See page 65, Percy Brown's Indian Painting under the Moghuls.) Abul Hasan's brother Mohammad 'Abd was also a celebrated painter in the court of Jahangir. About Abul Hasan let Jahangir speak himself:—

"On this day Abul Hasan, the painter, who has been honoured with the title of *Nādir-uz-zamān*, drew the picture of my accession as the frontispiece to the Jahangir-nāmā, and brought it to me. As it was worthy of all praise, he received endless favours. His work was perfect, and his picture is one of the *chefs-d'oevre* of the age. At the present time he has no rival or equal. If at this day the Masters Abdul-Hay and Bihzad were alive, they would have done him justice. His father, Aqa Riza'i, of Herat, at the time when I was prince, joined my service. He (Abul Hasan) was a Khanzada of my court. There is, however, no comparison between his work and that of his father (*i.e.*, he is far better than his father)— One cannot put them into the same category. My connection was based on my having reared him. From his earliest years upto the present time I have always looked after him, till his art has arrived at this rank. Truly he has become Nādir-uz-zamān."

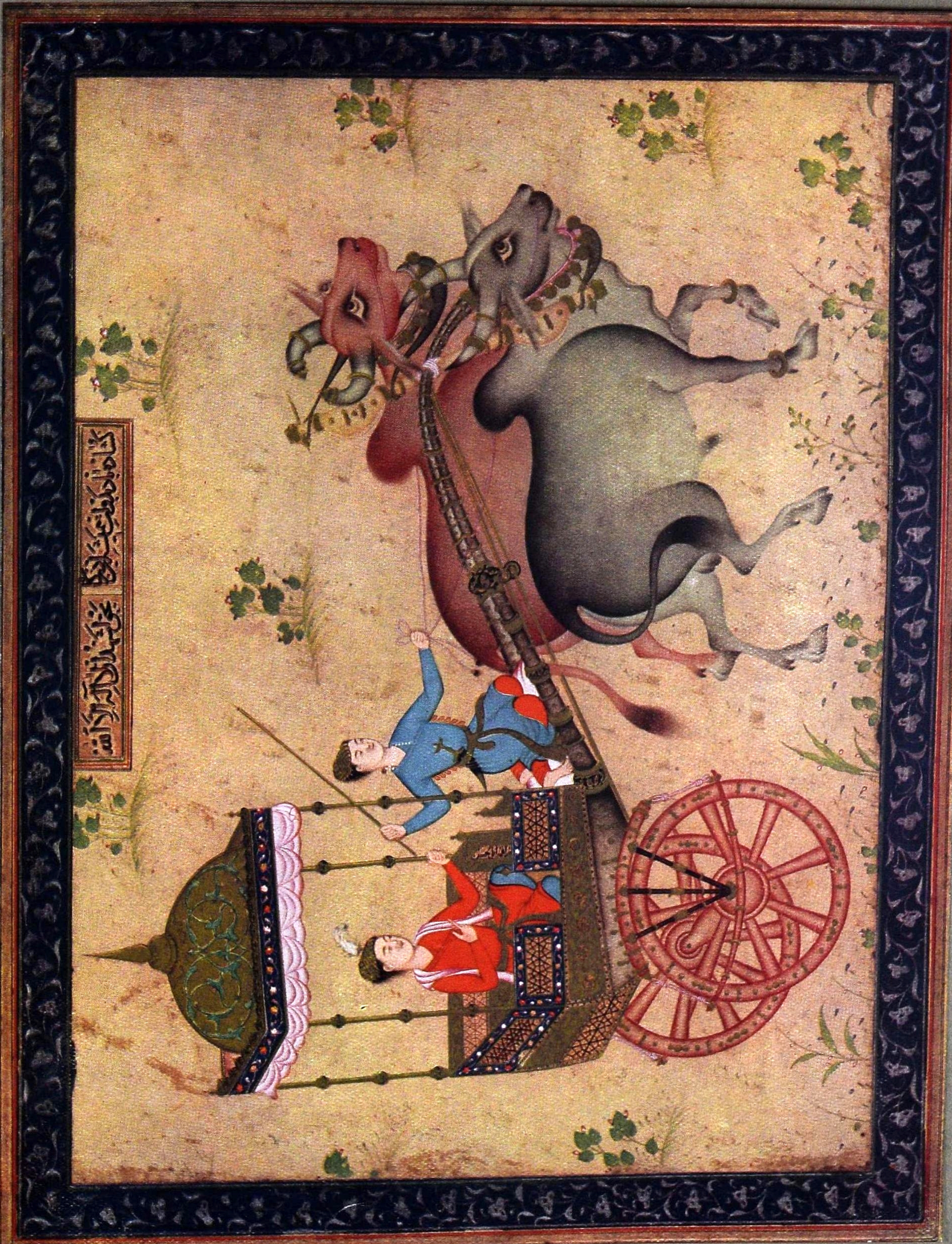
Very few pictures by this 'Wonder of the Age' have

survived. A charming portrait in purely Moghul style is reproduced by Percy Brown in his book on Indian Painting under the Moghuls, plate No. 17 (figure 1), which may be by Abul Hasan. A more authentic picture is the portrait of Jām Jassā of Jāmnagar or Nawānagar reproduced in plate no. 37 in the recent publication "Indian Book-Painting" by Kühnel and Goetz. In the words of Jahāngir the Jām was 'one of the greatest princes of Gujarāt and one of the most important Rajas of India. His land borders on the sea. He has standing army of 5,000 to 6,000 horsemen and in time of war can put into the field about 12,000. There are many horses in country. I presented him with a robe of State.'* This Jām Jassā or Jaswant was one of the ancestors of H. H. the Jām Ranjit Singhji of Jāmnagar. The portrait is signed 'Nādir-uz-zamān' and is certainly of considerable aesthetic merit. But none of the two pictures ascribed to Abul Hasan can compare with the gorgeous masterpiece reproduced here, which is altogether unique in Indian painting for its exceptional technique and wonderful combination of purely Indian, Iranian and even Chinese influences. I know of no Moghul picture which can rival this masterpiece by Abul Hasan in the sheer delicacy and fineness of brush-work. The picture has nothing in common with the hybrid art which prevailed during the time of Akbar and which is seen at its best in the famous *Razmanāmā* of Jaipur. The Indo-Persian productions by the court-painters of Akbar are at their best sumptuous illustrations carried out with all the resourcefulness and decorative feeling natural to Indian craftsmen. The artist's imagination, however, did not soar into the spaciousness of poetry and rise

* (See the gorgeous publication "Indian Book-Painting" from Jahangir's Album in the State Library in Berlin by Ernst Kühnel and Hermann Goetz (1926) pages 21-22; and 55.)

It should be noted that the beautiful picture of Jām reproduced by Kühnel and Goetz is signed '*Shabīh Jām Rāqim Nādir-uz-zamān*' (page 10)='the portrait of Jām by the writer Nādir-uz-zamān' bears not the smallest trace of Persian influence. *Rāqim* seems to have been the favourite designation assumed by the great Nādir-uz-zamān. Jahangir notes in his memoirs that '*the portraits that he painted were very beautiful.*' (Page 11 Op. cit.)

Plate No. 27
A Bullock Chariot by Abul Hasan.



superior to mere craftsmanship. Abul Hasan's picture, on the other hand, shows what could be achieved by a genius working in a period of transition and amidst a clash of style and above all of artistic and cultural traditions. Abul Hasan has taken the motif of his picture from the ordinary stuff of Indian life, as he saw round him and which remains unaltered in its essentials even to-day after a lapse of three centuries. A gaily painted chariot drawn by a pair of trotting bullocks is a sight still to be seen every day in the country side. One of these ordinary equipages Abul Hasan has presented with consummate skill and unerring observation. Indian painting knows of no finer study of the bovine species than this wonderful picture of a bullock pair by Abul Hasan. While the heads of the animals with their strange and somewhat wild expression are drawn more after the Persian or rather, the Chinese than the Indian fashion, the treatment of the bodies is absolutely Indian. While there is none of that feeling of genuine understanding and instinctive fellowship which even a mediocre Hindu artist imparts to his studies of cows, elephants and other animals, the superb brush-work is only comparable to that of the great Chinese and Japanese masters, who painted their animals and birds with such softness and delicacy of touch that the onlooker wants as if to feel the coat or the body of the painted world of nature. In this achievement of Abul Hasan there is nothing surprizing, for after all he was a Persian and his country's art owed its central inspiration to the great schools of Chinese painting. The picture illustrated here incidentally reveals a fundamental distinction between Indian and Persian drawing or rather all other Asiatic art. In the corner of the front panel of the chariot is inscribed '*Rāqim Abul Hasan,*' indicating the authorship of the picture. The artist has appropriately called himself *Rāqim* or the writer, for both the writer and the painter in the land of the Dragon and the Rising Sun, use the brush for writing and painting. Hence it is that the art of Iran, China and Japan is often characterized as being '*calligraphic*' in contradistinction

to the art of India which is based on the expressive, somewhat austere, but fluid sweep of line.

The technique of the picture is purely Persian, albeit the subject-matter is entirely Indian. The bullocks (one of which is of pink colour—rather an unusual hue in oxen) carry round their necks golden chains of jingling bells, wear anklets in the forelegs and have their horns tipped with gold. Abul Hasan seized with the intuitive insight of an artist, the Indian fondness for glittering ornament in his interpretation of oxen. The well-matched pair is shown gaily and joyously stepping out with their light equipage; and how superbly is their motion rendered—free in its spontaneity and balanced in the rhythm of the stride! It is curious to note that the golden pegs on the horizontal beam resting on the necks of the animals are shown projecting outwards in the Persian style when they should have been slanting inwards as in actual fact according to the arrangement usual in Indian paintings. The chariot is drawn with scrupulous fidelity to detail and especially to intricate decoration as seen in the elaborately painted panels with floral scrolls and geometrical patterns. Both the figures are Persian. The driver especially is painted in a somewhat difficult posture, but none of the figures can compare in the matter of aesthetic feeling with the magnificent pair of trotting bullocks.

It should also be noted that the very considerable amount of shading which the artist has used, specially in painting the animals and the chariot-wheels, imparts a sense of solidity and depth somewhat rare in Indian pictures of the early Moghul school.

The landscape is treated formally and with conventional decoration. The wayside growths with their tiny flowers shown on a creamy ground indicate the country side through which the bullocks are trotting at a leisurely pace. At the top in an illuminated plate is a line of benediction in Persian—*Khushādā bad badaulat hameshā in dargāh*, which is thus translated: May the portals of wealth remain open by the grace of the sacred

Kalmā (the holy word of the Quran); which is given in the plate to the left "*Bahakke Ash hadun lā-ilāh-il-'lillāh*"—I testify and declare that there is no god but God. On the reverse is a seal of Haji Mohammad Sheikh Karbalai which appears on many other paintings in the collection of B. Sitaram. In a plain calligraphic panel are inscribed some rather obscure Persian couplets which are literally rendered as follows:—

'O Rose! do not flirt with the breeze, for it is dangerous both for thy pocket of beauty and skirt of chastity (the poet here alludes poetically to the process of wind-pollination).

O, Kāshi (*Nom-de-plume* of the poet) do not boast of having known and entered the precincts of his chamber, for I knew and respected it before you became aware of it.

The man who used to be dumb out of fear of me, has now got a tongue and inclination even to advise me.

O Kāshi! do not fear that the enemy shall win the love of the beloved by his mere proximity; for really to be near is when one is accepted and is fit also.

If you consort with my enemies morning and evening and thereby bring disgrace to me it will also discredit you.

O deer of the forest! thou hast lost the sense of modesty so far that thou would resign thyself even to the love of a dog.

I will not feel ashamed even if I were to drink your very blood on account of my annoyance, for you go about morn and eve with drunkards who drink the cup of wine to its very dregs.

In asking about the limitations and restraints of my privacy, you should be thankful that you roam about freely in the company of your egotistical heart.'

There can be no doubt that Abul Hasan's 'Bullock Chariot' is the finest example of Indo-Persian art hitherto known and it is significant to note that the phase of Persian influence survived even during the reign of Jahangir. There can be little doubt that Abul Hasan hardly exercised any perceptible influence on his contemporaries, for the beautiful animal pictures by Mansur, Manohar and other court painters of Jahangir do not betray the

smallest trace of exotic influence. Though from the passage in *Tuzuki Jahāngiri* cited above, it would appear that Abul Hasan came to India at an early age, he made good use of the knowledge he acquired from his father—Āqa Razā who was too old to adapt his Persian craftsmanship to purely Indian traditions. While Abul Hasan achieved notable results in treating Indian *motifs* in Iranian technique and in the delineation of animals, he does not appear to have been equally successful in his representations of Indian figures dressed and posed as Iranians.

VII

A PAINTED EPISTLE BY USTĀD SĀLIVĀHANA.

THE treasures of the Jaina Bhāndārs have recently been brought to light, but only a small fraction of them has been even cursorily examined. The Jaina community seems to have been, generally speaking, always prosperous and appears to have taken special pains to build up and conserve valuable collections of manuscripts. It is for this reason that a large number of pre-Moghul works—remnants of literature and art, come from the old Jaina Bhāndārs or libraries. I am indebted to Muni Jinvijayaji, the accomplished historian and scholar of the Gujarāt Vidyāpītha at Ahmadābād for permission to make use of a pictorial document of exceptional interest, which was discovered by him in the collection of Muni Hansvijaya. The pictorial roll is about 13 feet long and about 13 inches broad and is in 2 pieces. The pictures are drawn by Ustād Sālivāhana of the court of Jahangir and it is definitely recorded that the historical incidents portrayed are true to life. Sālivāhana himself seems to have been a pious man, as he too has sent his humble greetings to the Āchārya Vijayasen Sūri who was then at Devapātan in Kāthiawāṛ.

The holiest festival of the Jainas is the Paryushaṇā-Parva, which falls in the month of Bhādrapada according to the Hindu calendar, and is celebrated for 8 days. On the last day, which is known as the Sāmvatsarika, everybody—young or old—keeps a fast. On this occasion it was customary in pre-postal days to send letters to relations and friends soliciting forgiveness for any acts of omission or commission perpetrated during the preceding year. This was a practice common to both the laity and the clergy. The latter used to send long letters to their immediate

superiors often embellished with illustrations, specially executed by themselves or professional artists, summarising the events of the year relating to their church as well as of general interest. These letters were called Vijnapti-patra or Kshamāpanā-patra, the earliest of which dates from the beginning of the 14th century and is written on palm-leaf. Some of the letters are as long as 60 feet and about a foot broad, and their contents are extremely varied. The writers used the letters as convenient media for bringing to the notice of their ecclesiastical heads their capacity for literary, artistic or philosophic expression; and not infrequently we find in them poetical works of singular merit. This system of letter writing continued till about the middle of the 18th century.* The most famous of these letters written is by Muni Sundarsūri in 1411 A.D. and is said to have been 162 feet long and to have contained several hundreds of illustrations and verses. The present letter is addressed by the Jains of Agra to the celebrated Jaina scholar Muni Vijayasen Sūri, the disciple and successor of Heervijaya Sūri, who was given the title of Jagat Guru—the world-preceptor, by the Emperor Jalaludin Akbar in about 1583.† The letter is dated Kartik Sudi 2, Monday Samvat 1667=1610 A.D. and is written in Gujarati with a considerable admixture of the then current Hindi.

It is now well-known what potent influence the Jaina teachers exercised on the religiously plastic mind of Akbar, who was always seeking enlightenment on the eternal problems of life and death from the preceptors of the various faiths in his empire. Abul Fazal mentions three eminent Jaina gurus Heervijaya Suri, Vijayasen Suri and Bhānuchandra Upādhyāy. It was at the instance of Heervijaya Sūri, who was classed by Sheikh Abul Fazal among the select few, who 'understood the mystery of both worlds,' that the Emperor prohibited the

* See the Hindi book—Vijnapti-Triveni by Jinvijaya, published by Jaina Ātmānand Sabhā, Bhāvanagar.

† See Ghose and Nahar's Epitome of Jainism (1917) for an English translation of the Firman—charter of rights granted to Heervijaya Sūri by Emperor Akbar in 1592 A.D. (Appendix B).

PLATE NOS. 28-29.

A Jaina Deputation.

killing of animals on the days of the Paryushaṇā festival throughout the empire and granted general amnesty to prisoners and caged birds. Disobedience to the orders was made a capital offence and the Emperor himself gave up his beloved pastime of hunting. This was in 1583. Three years later orders were issued confirming the abolition of the Jazia or the poll-tax and prohibiting slaughter of animals during periods collectively amounting to half the year. In 1592 Heervijaya Sūri starved himself to death, following the example of the great founder of Jainism-Mahāvīra Vardhamāna himself.* Vijayasena Sūri succeeded his great master to the leadership of the Jaina congregation.

The tolerant policy of Akbar seems to have been partially reversed by his successor especially in connection with the killing of animals for food. In 1610 Vivekaharsha and Udayaharsha—disciples of Vijayasena,—led a deputation in company with Rājā Rāmadāsa to the court of Jahangir at Agra and were able to secure an imperial rescript or Farman, prohibiting the animal slaughter during the eight days of the Paryushaṇā. It is this historical incident which is the subject-matter of the letter for forgiveness sent by the Jaina congregation of Agra to their celebrated Guru Vijayasena Sūri. The written portion measuring about 3 feet 7 inches in length comprises 76 lines, the first 26 of which are merely in praise of their great Guru. The important matter is contained only in lines 49 to 55 which are freely translated as follows:—

The Emperor is seated on the balcony. Rājā Rāmadāsa introduced the deputation led by Pandit Vivekaharsha, behind whom was Pandit Udayaharsha. The Emperor accepted our prayer and issued a Farman, which was duly proclaimed. Ustād Sālivāhan, the court painter, *has painted the scenes as he saw them* and sends his greetings.

The roll depicts a series of tableaux in the approved style of Moghul painting. The various people figuring in the pictures

* See pages 166-168 of "Akbar" by V. A. Smith, 1919.

are labelled in black ink. In a Darbar scene, which seems to have been an ordinary sitting of the Emperor's court and is therefore not quite so magnificent as the formal scenes usually painted by Moghul artists, Jahāngir is seen receiving a glass of wine from some attendant, not shown in the picture. Khurram, subsequently Shāh Jahān, is standing on the left. Rājā Rāmadāsa is presenting the Farman probably granted by the Emperor Akbar. The Jaina Sadhu is urging his prayer in the characteristic fashion. Outside the courtyard is a mixed crowd of Arabs, Turks, Persians and also a rather pathetic specimen of a European—in red baggy trousers, a black-coat and a broad-brimmed straw hat (plate No. 28-29). In the next scene is shown the actual proclamation of the renewed Farman in the presence of the two Jaina Sadhus in the principal bazār of the city. The second piece of the roll shows the great Vijayasena himself seated amongst the assemblage of his pious congregation of Shrāvaks (plate No. 30). Vijayaharsha followed by Udayaharsha is seen presenting the new Farman to his Guru. The portraits of Vijayasena as well as of his disciples dressed in spotless white and carrying the massive chowries—characteristic of the Jaina clergy* are of exceptional interest, both historical and aesthetic. In another part of the temple or the Upāshraya is being enacted a scene of great animation, where a man is dancing to the accompaniment of the *bina*, the pakhāwaja (the drum), the *saroda* and the cymbals. In a corner are seated three nuns with the *swastika* sign (an auspicious Jaina symbol) in front of them; while lay-women are coming in and scattering rice and paying their homage to their pious sisters. Artistically speaking, the pictures of the congregation of Vijayasena (plate No. 30) are probably among the finest pictures, illustrating the common life of the people by any Moghul artist yet known, of the time of Jahangir. The colouring is vivid and effective; and the technique more fluid but not less accomplished than that of the typical paintings of

* Only of the Shvetāmbara (lit. dressed in white) sect.

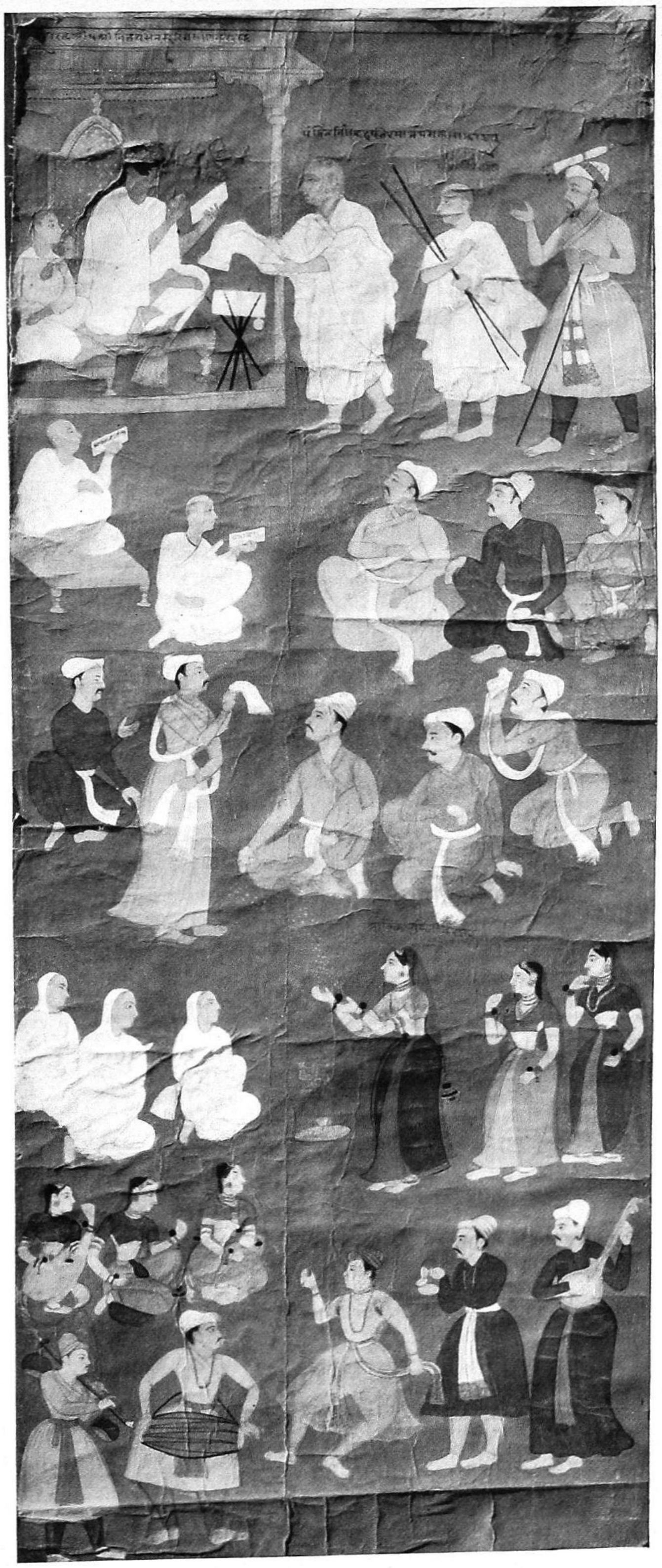


PLATE No. 30.

A scene from a Jaina temple.

Moghul school. The medium is paper and the pictures are painted generally on a ground of green, red, yellow or blue.

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the historical value of the pictorial epistle illustrated here. The letter bears the names of several Jains-men and women, of the city of Agra whose names are given in lines 29 to 42 and 68 to 72 of the written matter respectively. The letter winds up with the invitation and prayer to the great Sūri to visit the Jaina Sangha in Agra, as was customary with all such letters sent on the last day of the Paryushaṇā festival. In the portrait of Vijayasena Sūri, we have the faithful likeness of a great religious teacher of commanding personality and immense learning. It must be on account of such men that the Jainas were able to secure privileges from the Muslim courts, which were not merely concessions to their own religious ideas, but involved some inconvenience and even sacrifice to the Emperors personally as well as to the bulk of their subjects. The letter is signed by one Sīkahsā-suta probably the scribe, and vividly recalls an interesting episode of the reign of Jahāngir in the beginning of the 17th century. Incidentally it also opens up a prospect of securing further pictorial material connected, not with the pageantry of the court, but with the common life of the people. *

* I am indebted for much useful matter in connection with this note to the Gujarati article of Muni Jinvijayaji in the Jaina Sāhitya Samshodhaka, Part I, Samvat 1977.

VIII

SOME FLORAL PAINTINGS

THE history of Moghul painting proceeds by extremely rapid and more or less clearly defined stages. The phase of tutelage to Iranian traditions * was short-lived and even during the time of Akbar there was a reaction as indicated in the words ascribed to Dāniyāl—the drunkard son of the Emperor.

'We are tired of the old wearisome tales of Laila Majnun, the moth and the nightingale. Let the poets and artists take for their subjects *what we have ourselves seen and heard.*' †

The dominance of Bihzad and his school was not, however, shaken off till the accession of Jahangir in the beginning of the 17th century. The indigenous schools of Indian painting had been submerged during the period of anarchy, turmoil and internecine strife which supervened on the breakup of the Hindu hegemony in the middle of the 7th century; and the great aristocratic traditions of Ajanta and Bagh had degenerated into the popular and diminutive art of manuscript illustration, the appeal of which was primarily not aesthetic at all, for it was too

* I am indebted to Mr. O. C. Gangoly for this quotation.

† Recent researches, notably of von Lecoq prove that the art of medieval Iran and of China during the T'ang period owe a great deal to Manichean schools of painting; which flourished between the 8th and the 10th century in Eastern Turkestan under Uigur supremacy. Manichean art migrated back to Persia in the wake of Mongol conquests in the 13th century and may be said to be in the direct line of origin of the Iranian art which became famous under Kamaluddin Bihzad. The Persian art of portraiture, however, had widely diverged from the purely representational traditions of Manichean painters; whose portrait studies have more in common with the school of Moghul portrait-painters than with the works of Iranian masters of the 15th and the 16th centuries. In other words the Moghul school of painters, especially in its earlier stages of portrait-painting and book-illustration, owes more to the early Iranian art of Mani (born circa 216, died 273 A.D.) than to that of Bihzad and Agha Mirak, especially as regards its gorgeous colours and delicate, if somewhat austere draughtsmanship. (See Lecoq's die Manichäischen Miniaturen, Vols. II-III of his 'later Buddhist antiquities of Central Asia,' 1923.)

much occupied with suggestions and association of literary and theological ideas to worry itself with matters decorative or of outward beauty. The name of Bihzad on the other hand was more than a mere tradition in the Islamic world of the 16th century; for the founder of the Timurid dynasty could write of him in his memoirs as of a personal acquaintance: "Of the painters or limners, the master was Bihzad. He was a very elegant painter but did not draw young beardless faces well. He made the neck too large. Bearded faces he painted extremely well." Besides, Iran had always been the focus of Islamic culture and civilization and it was therefore but natural that Jalāludin Akbar should have employed Khwājā Abdul Samad of Shirāz—his own drawing master—and Muhammad Nādir of Samarkand to train the assemblage of Hindu and Muslim artists at his court. 'Even in a short time more than a hundred painters' says Abul Fazal, 'have become famous masters of the art, whilst a number of those who approached perfection, or of those who are middling, is very large!' The Khwājā's pupil notably Dashwant and Basāwan soon surpassed their master—the *Shirin-qalam* as he was called. The former was the son of a palki-bearer, who 'devoted his whole life to the art and used from love to his profession to draw and paint figures even on walls.' 'In a short time he surpassed all painters, but unfortunately the light of his talents was dimmed by the shadow of madness.' He committed suicide in 1584. Notwithstanding many a well-known name the art during the major portion of Akbar's reign was an art of imitation, of successful adaptation of Persian prototypes; and precisely in the measure of its accomplishment was its actual achievement aesthetically limited. The sumptuous pages of the *Razma-nāmā*—the most considerable of the illustrated works executed during Akbar's reign, remain at best magnificent, though rather arid examples of the illuminator's skill or of dazzling craftsmanship in manipulating complicated colour-schemes and executing somewhat melodramatic scenes. Over 75 per cent. of Akbar's court-painters were Hindus whose

pictures, Abul Fazal noted, 'surpass our conception of things.' He was, however, anticipating the events of the later reign rather than relating the actual facts within his own knowledge, when he wrote: 'most excellent painters are now to be found and masterpieces worthy of Bihzad may be placed by the side of the European painters who have attained worldwide fame.' Moghul painting under Akbar remained an art of servile imitation and petty illustration; and barring some portraits and animal studies it cannot be considered as anything beyond the tentative beginning of a great revival which reached its culminating point within the space of twenty years under the keen and fostering patronage of Jahāngir.

Jahāngir was an extraordinary man—a temperance-reformer, a confirmed drunkard, a keen naturalist, an ardent shikari, a connoisseur of art, an accomplished chronicler, a ruthless administrator, an easy-going *fainéant.* His first edict on his accession to the throne was that 'they should not make wine, or rice-spirit or any kind of intoxicating drug, or sell them; although I myself drink wine, and from the age of 18 years up till now, when I am thirty-eight, have persisted in it. When I first took a liking to drinking I sometimes took as much as twenty cups of double-distilled spirit; when by degrees it acquired a great influence over me I endeavoured to lessen the quantity, and in the period of seven years I have brought myself from fifteen cups to five or six. My times for drinking were varied; sometimes when three or four sidereal hours of the day remained I would begin to drink, and sometimes at night and partly by day. This went on till I was thirty years old. After that I took to drinking always at night. Now I drink only to digest my food.' [1]

Akbar cultivated the art of painting as an amusement and a study, and if one were to believe Abul Fazal, also as a means for securing immortality; for the learned Sheikh writes:—'His Majesty (Akbar) himself sat for his likeness, and also ordered to have the likenesses taken of all the grandees of the realm. An

(1) Vol. I, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, translated by A. Rogers.

immense album was thus formed, those that have passed away have received a new life, and those who are still alive, have immortality promised them.'

Jahāngir's interest in painting was more genuine and his judgment sounder than that of his great father. He considered his painters 'gentlemen,' as he told Sir Thomas Roe when the latter offered Rs. 50 as 'a painter's reward' for a copy of his painting made by one of the Moghul artists. He was always accompanied by one or more of his artists wherever he went. In fact the court-painter was a sort of chronicler of contemporary history in constant attendance on the Emperor. The art of painting under such a ruler was bound to gain in dignity and prestige. It freed itself completely from the leading strings of Iranian masters and boldly ventured in hitherto untried regions. It acquired a new consciousness of its capabilities and its inherent strength and was, therefore, ready to welcome and absorb elements of alien origin, which were found suitable for its own variegated fabric of art traditions. The court art of Jahangir freely borrowed from Europe and the Far East; but it never succumbed to outside influences. * It retained its own individuality in every phase of its varied activities; for Moghul art was in a class by itself and the connoisseur Emperor had no doubt about its unrivalled supremacy. Persian art was already languishing; and which other court in the East could boast of such a galaxy of talents as Abul Hasan Nādir-uz-Zamān, Farukh Beg, Mansur Nādir-ul-Asar, Bishun Dās, Manohar, Gobardhan, Daulat, Muhammad Nadir and Ustād Murād?

Whether in the range of subject-matter or the matter of sheer technique, Moghul art attained its greatest perfection during the short reign of Jahāngir. The Emperor was a keen naturalist, and the artist's brush was requisitioned for drawing the likenesses of anything particularly beautiful or peculiarly novel in the realm of Nature. The animal studies by Mansur, Murād and Manohar constitute a unique chapter in the history

* See Indian Book Painting by Goetz and Kühnel, op. cit.

of Indian graphic art. A number of masterpieces of zoological portraiture executed by these artists has survived and amongst them none are better known or more admired than the creations of Mansur *Nakkāsh*. In a memorable passage of his memoirs the Emperor writes: 'Also Ustād Mansur has become such a master in painting that he has the title of Nādir-ul-Asar and *in the art of drawing* is unique in his generation.' Mansur was in other words regarded only next to Abul Hasan. 'In the time of my father's reign and of my own', says Jahangir, 'these two had had no third' (Tuzuk-i-Jahāngiri translated by Alexander Rogers, pages 20-21).

The floral paintings of Mansur Naqqāsh have hitherto been unknown, though they have been referred to in a delightful passage in the Tuzuk-i-Jahāngiri in which the Emperor gaily discourses on the valley of Kashmir; which 'is a garden of eternal spring or an iron fort to a palace of kings—a delightful flower-bed, and a heart-expanding heritage for dervishes. Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond all descriptions. There are running streams and fountains beyond count. Wherever the eye reaches, there are verdure and running water. The red rose, the violet, and the narcissus grow of themselves; in the fields, there are all kinds of flowers and all sorts of sweet-scented herbs more than can be calculated. In the soul-enchanting spring the hills and plains are filled with blossoms; the gates, the walls, the courts, the roofs, are lighted up by the torches of banquet-adorning tulips. What shall we say of these things or of the wide meadows (julgaha) and the fragrant trefoil?

VERSE.

"The garden-nymphs were brilliant,
Their cheeks shone like lamps;
There were fragrant buds on their stems (or 'under their rind')
Like dark amulets on the arms of the beloved,
The wakeful, ode-rehearsing nightingale
Whetted the desires of wine-drinkers;
At each fountain the duck dipped his beak
Like golden scissors cutting silk;

There were flower-carpets and fresh rosebuds,
The wind fanned the lamps of the roses,
The violet braided her locks,
The buds tied a knot in the heart."

"Thank God that on this occasion I beheld the beauties of the spring. This year, in the little garden of the palace and on the roof of the chief mosque, the tulips blossomed luxuriantly." ..... 'There are two kinds of lilies. That which is grown in gardens is vigorous (Balida) and fresh (lit. green) coloured, the other is a wild kind. Although the latter has less colour it is very sweet-scented'.... 'The flowers that are seen in the territories of Kashmir are beyond all calculation. *Those that Nadir-ul-Asar Ustad Mansur has painted are more than 100.*' (Vol. II, pages 143-45)...... 'As far as the eye could reach, flowers of various hue were blooming and in the midst of the flowers and verdure beautiful streams of water were flowing; one might say it was a page that the painter of destiny had drawn with the pencil of creation. The buds of hearts break into flower from beholding it.' (Page 164.)

The picture reproduced here[1] is the only example yet known of Mansur's floral paintings and is signed '*Jahāngir-shāhi, the work of the slave of the Presence-Chamber, Mansur Naqqāsh,*' and is enclosed within a floral border executed in gold against a background of deep blue (plate No. 31). The outward mounting is of the conventional floral design and has to a large extent lost its glowing colours. The entire picture is the product of two or more hands working in collaboration; for while the plant in bloom is from the brush of Mansur Naqqash—the designer, the illuminated panel on either side of it is executed by the illustrious calligraphist, Mulla Mir Ali of Herat (died 1544 A.D.), and it is more than probable that the floral border is done by some other third person. On the reverse enclosed within a border is a splendidly illuminated panel of writing signed by *Al*

(1) This picture was discovered by me in a picture album, belonging to the Habibganj Library (Aligarh district), and is reproduced here by the courtesy of Nawab Habibul-Rahman Khan, Minister of Charities, Hyderabad.

Plate No. 31
Red Blossoms.

Faqir Mir Ali—by the slave Mir Ali. Two verses are written in Turki, the language of Turkestan and Central Asia, probably the mother-tongue of the calligraphist in the flowing curves of the *nastāliq* character. They are literally translated as follows :—"My Mirza who graces the imperial seat with triumph and glory, is the Lord of the Nation. Triumph and glory will always be his, who swears fealty to his state." In the marginal border including the embroidered panel by Mir Ali is written an elaborate invocation to God in the most approved style of Iranian poetry. The couplets are literally rendered as follows :—"O Lord, Thou hast put the lock of wisdom to the treasure of the heart, and wipest the dust of ignorance from the mirror of the soul. Thou art the balm for the burning wounds of the distraught and the reservoir of joy for those who are depressed through sorrow. Thou revealest the veins of riches from the side of mountains and bringest the dawn of ease in the night of sorrow and grief. Thou art the asylum in the loneliness of lonely persons, and the Altar of unity of the unique. Thou dischargest with Thy bow the arrows of rain through the Heavens filling the flower-goblets with the rain of wine. Thou art the veil of chastity for the beautiful, the sheet of mercy for those that have died the death of martyrdom." *

On the margin of the picture are a few verses written in Persian which are thus translated :—

"O, Saki, † what matters to thee if Thou accede to my prayer and allow me to retain what has been given to me;

For Thou knowest from every cup ‡ the need for helping the needy, for as Thou art aware, of dust are we made.

Therefore let it be the auspicious Id ¶ when the weary heart longeth for boons suited to the occasion; (but) it will not be strange if Thou, O Beloved, look askance at the

* The reference is to God.

† As the drinking goblet is made of clay and is discarded after being used but once, so is the mortal frame made of dust and useless after use.

‡ The auspicious day of the Mussalmans.

¶ The whole poem is an invocation to God and each line refers to Him and His attributes in the vocative.

supplication for blessings of the festival."

The calligraphic panel is sumptuously mounted with a lovely border of conventional flowers picked out in gold on a back-ground of deep blue. On one of the leaves of the border is written, "Halkāri Harif" § meaning probably that the border work has been finished by an equally accomplished craftsman as Mulla Mir Ali himself.

The red blossoms have been shown in full bloom on waving stalks with a dragonfly and a marvellously drawn butterfly hovering at the top.. It appears to be one of the mannerisms of Mansur to paint his birds and animals against an appropriate background of landscape. || The dark-green of the sessile elongated leaves and the blazing red of the blossoms have been well brought out against a background of yellow. Mansur must have taken to botanical paintings late in his career, for they are not mentioned till the 15th year of Jahangir's accession (*i.e.* 1620 A.D.). The high praise bestowed on him by Jahangir would appear to be amply justified when one looks carefully at the picture of the butterfly with its exquisite precision of drawing and its wonderful harmonies of colour. When all is said and done it must, however, be admitted that the achievements of Mansur and his pupils cannot bear comparison with the creations of the Far Eastern artists, to whom was reserved the secret of blowing the vital spark of life in the simplest of drawings, whether of flowers, of birds or of animals.

Another picture depicting Blue Lilies is reproduced in plate No. 32, which may have been painted by the great Mansur himself or one of his principal pupils; for there is the same superb craftsmanship. The two open flowers and the closed bud are treated similarly against a conventional ground as in the picture of the 'Red Blossoms' signed by Mansur.

§ "Harif" means a rival, a competitor, and 'Halkari' means the decorated work. It is hardly probable that "Harif" is a proper name. The probable meaning is that the border-work is also of the same merit as the sumptuous illumination of the calligraphic panel.

|| See plate 23, depicting pea-fowls against an elaborate background with geese flying at the top—Percy Brown's Indian Painting under the Moghuls.

PLATE NO. 32
Blue Lilies.

GOVERNMENT MUSEUM
7 MAR 1944
MADRAS

Plate No. 33.
A Bunch of Pomegranate Blossoms.

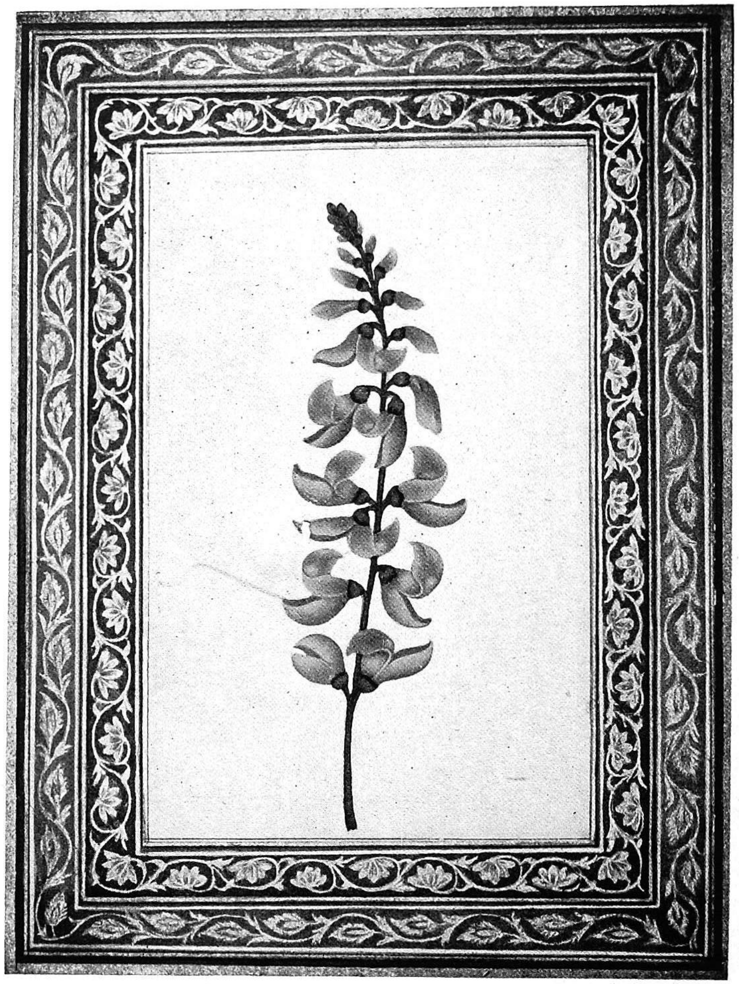


Plate No. 34.
A Spike of Lupinus.

On the reverse are the lines of Persian poetry, which mean :—

Let thy aspirations be fulfilled, and let all that is obscure in the Universe be illumined to thee. May success be thy suitor in all thine enterprise and may the course that thou adopt, be easy and unobstructed.

It is said, I do not know with what justification, that duplicates of some of the floral studies by Mansur were afterwards included in the famous album of Dara Shikoh, presented by him to 'his dearest and nearest friend, Nadira Begum' in 1641; one of which depicting a jonquil is reproduced by Percy Brown in his Indian Painting under the Moghuls (see plate 22). I am inclined to think that these duplicates, if at all, were from the brush of some other artists rather than Ustad Mansur, for there are obvious differences of style and mannerisms between the picture of the "Red Blossoms" and the picture reproduced by Percy Brown.

A word may here be said about the significance of the title of *Naqqāsh*, which Mansur uses in signing his pictures; for it helps us to understand the limitations of his floral and animal studies and gives us a clue as to the *raison-d'être* of the survival of his style even after the Moghul school had disappeared as a separate entity. Naqqāsh means a designer and even at the present day, it is the Naqqāsh who is responsible for working out the designs and patterns to be worked in gold and silver thread in the silk fabrics of Benares or the shawls of Kashmir or the marble mosaics of Agra and Delhi. The *naqqāsh* is in other words the brain behind the weaver or the stone-cutter as the case may be; and as examples of his exceptional skill in drawing and colouring I am able to reproduce two pictures from the collection of His Highness the Mahārājā of Benares (plates Nos. 33 and 34). The spike of *Lupinus* (?) flowers and the pomegranate blooms with three ripe fruits bursting with their wealth of seed may be considered as typical examples of the finished workmanship of a Naqqāsh working about the end of the 18th or the beginning of the 19th century. Notwithstanding the magnificent tinting, this Naqqāsh work remains essentially an

art of prose and with all its impeccable craftsmanship cannot for a moment be placed alongside the animated studies by Chinese and Japanese masters. The profession of a Naqqāsh is hereditary; and later generations, generally Musalmāns, have been content to copy the stereotyped patterns and designs just as their colleagues have done in other crafts. The work of the Naqqāsh was similar to that of the stone-cutter, who executed the unrivalled arabesque and floral designs in the monuments of the time of Shah Jahan, only a memory of which survives in the debased work of modern Agra and Delhi. * The Naqqāsh was primarily a craftsman and hence the traditions of his craft continued in a more or less attenuated form with the change of conditions and the general deterioration in taste. For this reason the floral and zoological studies by Mughal artists rarely rise beyond the level of mere likenesses. Every resource of the artist's palette was concentrated on obtaining a faithful reproduction; and in the process the inner poetry was missed. Hence it is that magnificent pictures by masters such as Mansur, Manohar and Murād pale by comparison with the creations of 'Hindu' artists, who painted their animals as if they too had an emotional life of their own, worthy of being understood and explained through the medium of artistic intuition and expression. Cows, for instance, were painted by the Pahāri painters in a manner totally distinct from that of their Moghul confrères, and there are not many animal studies by Mughal artists which could touch the levels attained by the author of the Jaipur picture—Govardhandharan or even the ordinary run of Pahāri painters in their delineations of animals and birds. Mansur's brilliant picture of lily blossoms is indubitably a masterpiece of draughtsmanship and colour, but it fails to touch the emotional chords in a way that the facile studies of the Hindu artists do. †

* I have no doubt that there was vital connection between the art of the Moghul painter and the stone-cutter—especially during the reigns of Jahāngir and Shāh Jahān. One has only to see their workmanship to be convinced of the underlying affinity.

† See Rupam Nos. 19-20 in which I first published Mansur's picture.

NOTES ON PLATES
MOGHUL SCHOOL

PLATE No. 35.

Jahāngir.

NOTES ON PLATES

MOGHUL SCHOOL

A PORTRAIT OF JAHANGIR

(Plate No. 35)

THIS delicate portrait of Jahāngir shows the fine quality of draughtsmanship and subtlety of characterisation which the Moghul artists achieved even within the rigid limitations which they prescribed for themselves. The picture is absolutely untinted except for a slight touch of pink on the lips and the ruby in the necklace. The emperor is drawn in a conventional pose of holding a flower. It is a portrait of Jahāngir in his later years, when continued dissipation had begun to leave its marks; for the chin is slightly protruding and the cheeks are becoming flabby.

On the reverse is an inscription in Persian which is translated as follows:—

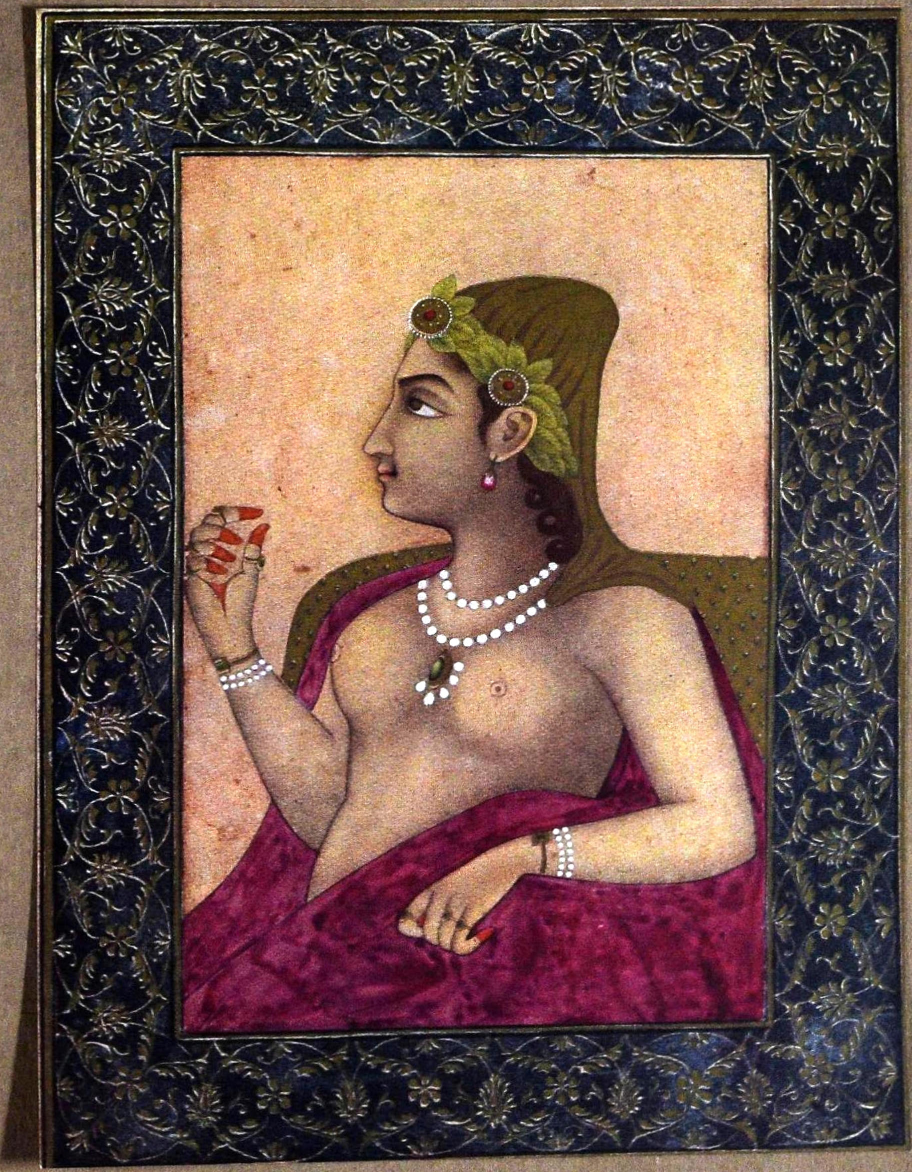
'Thanks to God that the likeness which the heart desired to create has at last appeared from behind the curtain of Destiny. What thorns the enemies sowed and the obstructions they raised, proved of no avail.'

THE STUDY OF A WOMAN BY GOVARDHANA

(Plate No. 36)

The portrait is inscribed on the reverse: *Amal-Gobardhan Musawwir*—painted by Gobardhan painter—It may well be the creation by the artist named, who was one of the celebrated painters of the court of Jahāngir; for the brush work is extremely fine, the colour scheme sumptuous and the treatment of hands sensitive. The face is remarkably beautiful and full of character. The lady reclining against a gold brocade cushion belongs probably to the class of *danseuses* and courtezans—expert alike in dance, music and all the artifices of love. The *negligè* robe is painted champagne red, while the scarf thrown over the head and forming a sort of cap, golden. On the forehead is fastened a beautiful plate of leaves held in position by jewelled brooches. The picture is altogether a dainty specimen of the Moghul art at its zenith. A gorgeous Darbar scene by Gobardhan is reproduced in the coloured frontispiece to Mr. Percy Brown's Indian Painting under the Mughals. Several pictures by this artist are reproduced by Goetz and Kühnel in their sumptuous publication—the Indian Book Painting.

Plate No. 36
Study of a Woman by Govardhana.



THE HOUSE OF SHEIKH FŪL BY BISHANDĀS *

(Plate No. 37)

One of the gems in the collection of the Bhārat Kalā Parishad of Benares is a beautiful picture by Bishan Dās, who is described by Jahāngir in his memoirs as 'unequalled in his age for taking likenesses.' The reputation of this Hindu artist stood so high that he was deputed in 1617 by his royal patron along with the ambassador Khan' Alam Barkhurdār to the court of Iran 'to take the portraits of the Shāh (Abbas Safvi) and the chief men of his state.' The results of his deputation were considered so satisfactory that 'the painter was honoured with the gift of an elephant;' for as Jahāngir remarks 'he had drawn the likenesses of most of them, and especially taken that of my brother the Shāh exceedingly well, so that when I showed it to any of his servants, they said it was exceedingly well drawn.'

In all there are not more than a dozen examples known of Bishan Dās's work. †

He worked during the reigns of Akbar and Jahāngir. A joint picture by *Nānhā* and *Bishan Dās* illustrating a page of Wakiat-i-Bābari—(memoirs of Babar) showing the emperor laying out the gardens, now known as Rām Bāgh at Agra is reproduced in Binyon's 'Court-painters of the Grand Moghuls' (plate 4). A more characteristic example, however, is furnished by a picture depicting Rānā Amar Singh of Mewar with his two sons Karan and Bhim, reproduced in plate 19 of the port-folio of Indian drawings of Victoria and Albert Museum.

The picture reproduced here measures 14½ inches by 10½ inches and bears the following inscription:—"*Shabih Sheikh Fūl Majjhoob ki dar Āgar mee bāshad—Amal Bishan Dās*" *i.e.* a painting of Sheikh Fūl—a mad devotee, who *lives* at present in the city of Agra, by Bishan Dās. On the reverse is a square seal stamped in gold which reads as follows:—

* This note first appeared in the Rupam for October 1925.

† See Percy Brown's Indian Painting under the Moghuls, pages 151-152; also Goetz and Kühnel (op. cit.)

Diler Himmat Khān Bahādur Muzaffarjang Amirud-daulāh Farzand Khān Bahādur.

This 'brave' Himmat Khān was probably the Moghul captain who fell in 1696 fighting the Mahratta general Sāntā Ghorparé, during the reign of Aurangzeb. (1)

It need hardly be said that the inscription of the seal is valuable only as an incident in the history of ownership of the picture.

The centre of the picture is the modest abode of Sheikh Fūl, situated in a quiet corner of the city. It is cleverly put a little side ways, so that the men looking at it should face towards the west. The Fakir who must have been a local celebrity on account of his piety, is digging away at the plastered surface of the verandah with a dagger-like implement. A varied scene of activity is presented before the place in the early hours of the morning giving us an interesting glimpse of the urban life during the days of Jahāngir. It is the privilege of the holy men in the East to have their requirements met and their needs attended to, by the public, without asking therefor. A sweeper is still gathering the sweepings, while the water-bearer with the leather skin slung over his left shoulder makes his bustling appearance. A picturesquely clad individual, with a peaked cap and a long tassel makes his salutations; while a more important individual—a young noble-man of the court beardless and wearing pearl ear-rings (2) according to the etiquette of the times, is calling attention of a venerable-looking man leaning on a long stick, to the maudlin activities of the Sheikh. A little in the rear is the thoughtful figure of a student with a stout volume in the left hand, quenching his thirst in a manner still common in Hindustan. In the right hand corner is sitting a fellow, listless and sleepy. The kitchen fire has still

(1) See Sarkar's Aurangzeb, Volume 5, page 120.

(2) One should bear in mind, when studying the Mogul sixteenth and seventeenth century portraits, that Akbar, in 1591, compelled his courtiers to shave off their beards, and that this order remained in force throughout the following reign. Furthermore it should be noted that Jahāngir introduced the fashion of wearing ear-rings in 1614. (Page 2 of Victoria and Albert Museum Portfolios, Indian Drawings.)

to be lit. A swarthy milk-man appears with a jar of milk on the head and a pair of scales in the hand, to take his customary offerings at the holy shrine. The scene is quieter on the left side of the picture. A boy wearing a rose-coloured *jāmā* presents a basket of fruits probably on behalf of the women standing just behind him. All these activities however make no impression on the pre-occupied and self-absorbed Sheikh.

There is a certain amount of peace and serenity about the picture, notwithstanding the animation of the scene in front. The Sheikh's quiet retreat is nestling under the hospitable branches of a *Neem* tree, which is drawn with rare detail and sureness of touch. A pair of ravens, drawn to perfection is shown on opposite housetops. There are no less than 25 figures painted in a variety of poses and attitudes; but the extremely sensitive portrait of Sheikh Fūl with his long, alert and athletic frame, his shaggy beard and unkempt hair immediately arrests attention. The face drawn in profile is a marvel of subtle and penetrating portraiture and revealing expression. It must, however, be admitted that the scale of the portrait makes it somewhat difficult to appreciate the amount of work and knowledge of human nature put in this grouped portrait—especially in the drawing of the mad devotee.

Percy Brown has rightly noted that the final test of a good Moghul painting lies in the treatment of the hands. The artist puts into their drawing, 'a certain distinguishing quality, in some a nervous sensitive feeling, in others suppleness or muscular strength, using one or the other as an aid to express the character' of his figures. The chatty *Bhisti* or waterman is known as much by his leather skin as by his attitude of nonchalance. The sympathetic interest of the young nobleman is indicated equally by the expression of his eyes as by the gesture of his outstretched arm. The faith of the women, the homage of the common folk—Hindus and Musalmans, the piety of the man who is greeting the fakir with a low bow on the verandah of the mosque, and the lethargy of the fellow sitting by himself in a corner with

folded hands, are similarly rendered, tersely and effectively with a profound knowledge of natural pose and unstudied gesture. The colour scheme is extremely quiet and subdued in tone. The interest of the picture is greatly enhanced by this reticence of tints and subordination of mere technique or cleverness of disposition to sincerity of representation. The 'House of Sheikh Fūl' is full worthy of the great master 'unequalled in his age for taking likenesses,' and of being classed among the notable creations of Moghul portraiture.*

* The signed pictures from the Tagore collection and the Boston Museum are reproduced in Rupam No. 4, pages 8-11. The subject matter of both is the meeting of Khan Alam and Shah Abbas I. There is only one more picture in the Wantage collection by the same artist, which has not yet been published. 2 pictures by Bishan Das have been reproduced by Goetz and Kühnel (op. cit.)

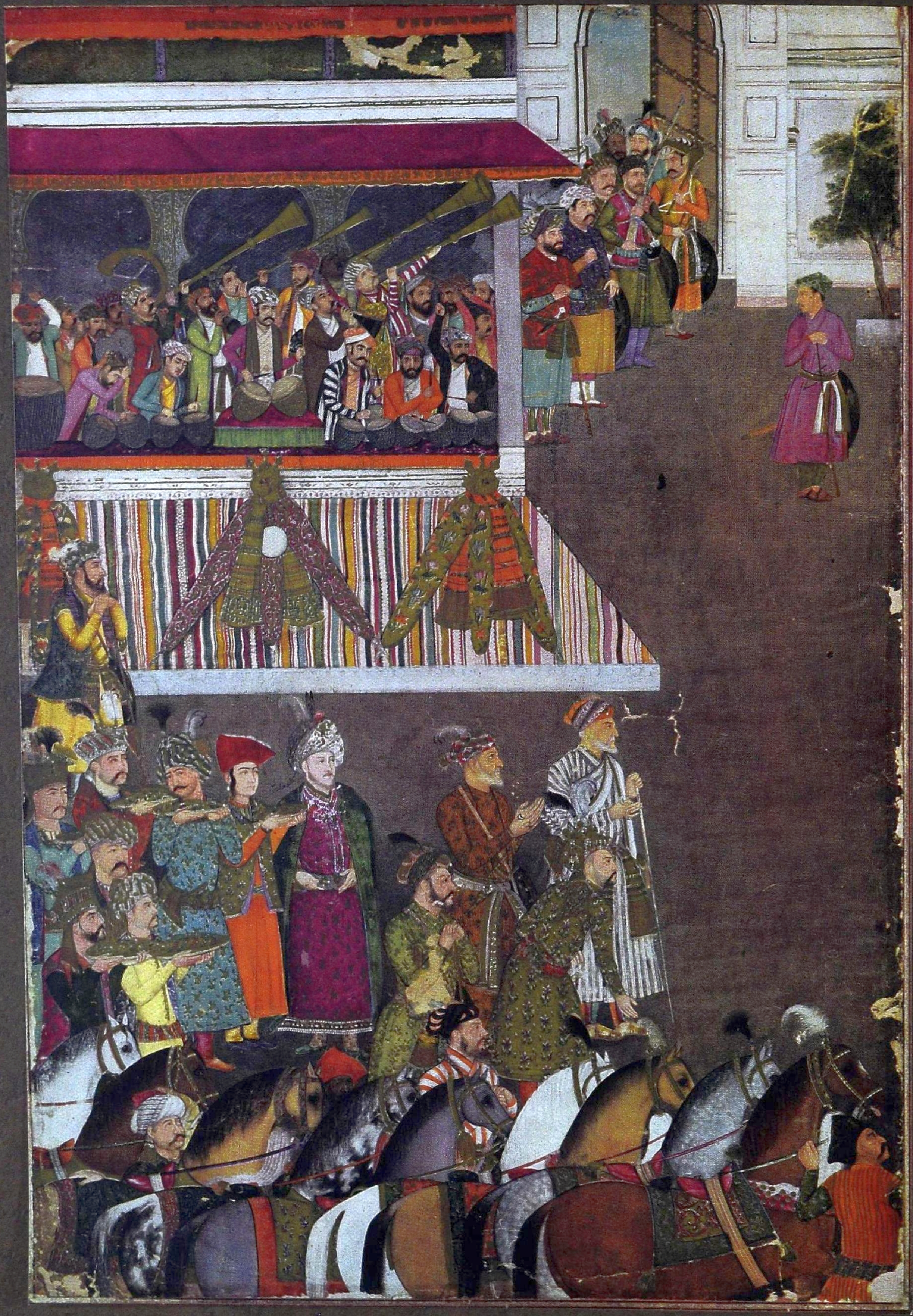


Plate No. 38

A Darbār Scene.

A DARBAR SCENE
(Plate No. 38)

Only a part of the Imperial Darbar is presented by the artist, for the Emperor is not in the picture. ' Ali Mardān Khān, Governor of Kandhār is seen bowing in the Moghul fashion by doing *mujrā*. His name is written in red in fine letters on the hem of his golden robe. A high nobleman of the court of Iran wearing a long green robe bearing the name of Ganj 'Ali Khān is standing just behind the three men in Moghul costume. Both Ganj 'Ali Khān and his son Ali Mardān Khān are splendidly attired in long Persian coats and wear jewelled turbans with feather plumes. Behind them are the various attendants bringing the choicest gifts of the land to be laid at the feet of the Moghul Emperor. In the foreground of the picture are with the grooms, gaily caparisoned steeds for which western countries have been famous for centuries. What a lovely array of horses is presented before us—sleek, powerful animals of noble strain! It is not often that Indian painters give us such exceptionally finished studies of the equine species. At the top of the picture is shown the *Naubatkhānā*—the royal band of musicians with their variety of instruments. The conductor is seated on a raised daîs with a pair of drums in front of him. Between the *Naubatkhānā* and the assemblage below, is a platform with the various dresses and costly textiles arranged on stands, probably meant as gifts along the horses and trays of jewels to the Emperor.

The incident chronicled by the painter is according to Dr. Coomarswamy the fall of Kandhār in 1602 and the subsequent appointment of Ganj 'Ali Khān as Governor. The latter was a Kurd and Governor of Kerman for thirty years under Shāh Ābbās II. When Kandhār was recovered by Shāh Abbās in 1602 from Jahāngir, the Kurd was made Governor. Ganj 'Ali Khān died in 1605 and was succeeded by his more famous son 'Ali Mardān Khān, who surrendered the post in 1637-38 to Qulij Khān, Governor of Lahore, representing the Moghul

Emperor. Dr. Coomaraswamy is inclined to think that this magnificent picture was commissioned at this time either by Shāh Jahān or 'Ali Mardān Khān himself. The latter was made Governor of Kashmir and a year or two later, of the whole of the Punjab and of Kabul. The splendid gardens still surviving in Kashmir and the Punjab still bear evidence to the versatility and the eye for beauty of the Persian. 'Ali Mardān Khān seems to have been an accomplished engineer and architect; for the famous Shalimar gardens of Lahore are said to have been designed by him in 1634; and the celebrated canal of Delhi as well as the introduction of the beautiful Chenar tree (*platanus orientalis*) are also attributed to him.* In 1643-44 he became Amir-ul-Umra and died in 1667. His eldest son Abdulla Beg also rose to high office and received the title of Ganj 'Ali Khān during the reign of Aurangzeb.†

There can be little doubt that this gorgeous picture was one of the series painted for illustrating the royal memoirs or the chronicles as was customary with the Moghul Emperors at least up to the time of Shāh Jahān. The picture entitled 'An European embassy' seems to belong to the same series, as it is similar in technique and about the same in size. (See plate No. 39.)

Whatever the limitations of Moghul painting may have been, in its highest flights it is an art of singular fascination, unsurpassed craftsmanship and amazing characterisation. A scene such as this gives a far more accurate and vivid idea of the

* See page 136 'Gardens of the Great Moghuls' by C. M. Villiers Stuart.

† See the Year-Book of Oriental Art and Culture, 1924-25, Vol. I, pages 66-67. The present picture has been frequently reproduced in black and white, the most satisfactory of which is plate No. 48 in the Year Book. Vincent Smith has also reproduced it from a small photograph (plate 123, page 480 of his History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon), but with a wrong description. Cf. S. Mohammad Latif's Lahore, (1892), pages 53-58; and pages 152-153. "Under orders of His Majesty Motamid Khan-Mir Bakhshi and Tarbiyat Khan, the second Bakhsi having received Ali Mardan Khan up to the gate of Khās-o-Àm introduced him to the Emperor's audience. The Khan having paid his obeisance offered His Majesty a nazar of 1,000 gold mohurs and was honoured with a *Khillat* consisting of silk and embroidered clothes, a jewelled turban with aigrette, a jewelled dagger, shield and sword." Quoted on page 53 from Shāh-Jahān-nāmā by Mohammad Sāleh Lahori. Ali Mardan Khan's tomb is an imposing structure, which is still one of the sights of Lahore.

pageantry of the Moghul court, its elaborate etiquette, its supreme refinement and even its barbaric splendour than any volumes of learned disquisition. On the reverse is a panel 6·4 inches by 3½ inches depicting a *Koel*—the Indian cuckoo and another yellow breasted bird which I am unable to identify. The bird-studies are lovely examples of the new departure which Jahāngir initiated to satisfy his boundless curiosity as a naturalist of exceptional gifts and keen observation

AN EUROPEAN EMBASSY

(Plate No. 39)

I have not been able to find out the exact historical incident which is the subject-matter of this magnificent picture. The Emperor Shāh Jahān is seated in the Diwān-i-khās with two princes of the royal blood in front of him and two behind—probably Dārā, Shujā, Murād and Aurangzeb. The picture probably relates to the earlier part of Shāh Jahān's reign, for the royal princes and a number of courtiers wear the ear-rings customary of his father's court. The European embassy is just being ushered in the presence of the Emperor, and it is interesting to note that it consists of both men and women. It is perhaps a Portuguese Mission come to the court of Delhi to secure some special privileges. It is interesting to note that the Europeans in the 17th century did not confine themselves to sombre colours in their choice of headgear. The women are elaborately dressed, only one of whom is wearing a hat. It is superfluous to mention the obvious merits of the picture, which belongs to the heyday of Moghul greatness—political and artistic. Whether as a piece of grouped portraiture or as an example of penetrating delineation of character, the picture ranks amongst the great master-pieces of Moghul painting. No reproduction can convey the throbbing tones and matchless harmonies of colour. The artist's palette vividly recalls a scene of unparalleled grandeur of the spacious days of the most magnificent of the Moghul Emperors. A courtier on the left of the picture just behind the whisk-bearer seems to read from a written memorandum, the following words of which could be distinguished and thus translated : Before this honourable Court........

On the reverse is a conventional picture of a plant with variegated flowers, which is possibly of a later date.

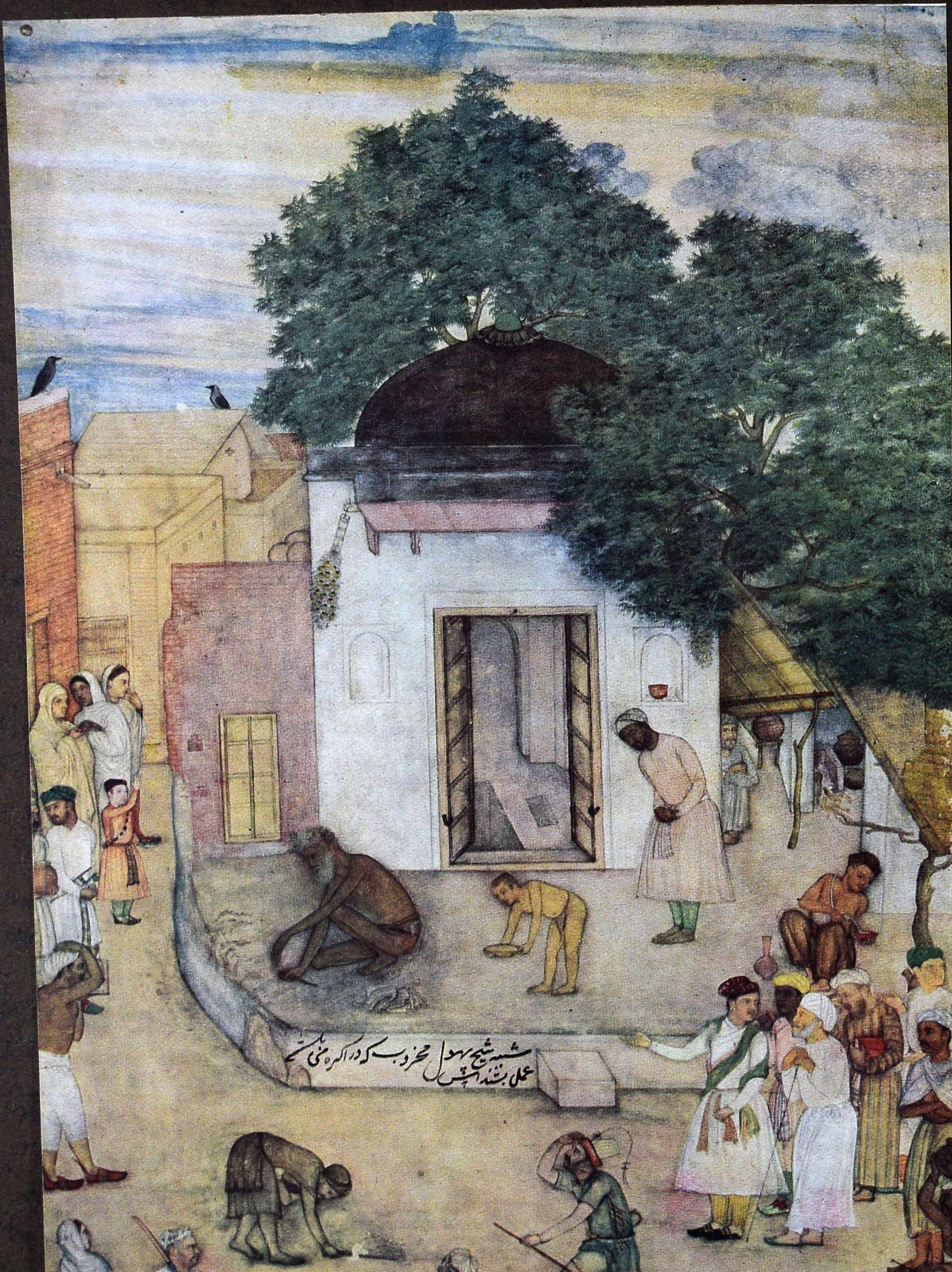

شبیه شیخ پهول مجذوب که در اگره می باشد
عمل بشنداس

Plate No. 37

The House of Sheikh Fūl by Bishandās.

Plate No. 39
An European Embassy.

Plate No. 40

A Pious Conclave.

A PIOUS CONCLAVE
(Plate No. 40)

Here is a wonderfully fine example of Moghul painting executed during the earlier years of Shāh Jahān's reign. In a work of this nature it is unnecessary to mention the obvious features of mere craftsmanship, for what could be better than the supple draughtsmanship, the finished colouring and the extraordinary fineness of brush-work? The most noticeable point, however, is the marvellous characterisation of each of the four figures depicted by the artist. At one end is the inexperienced callow youth, probably a prince of the royal blood, with pearl ear-rings, clad in the gorgeous attire of Moghul nobility, plucking the strings of a musical instrument. Seated along with him is the shrewd worldly figure of the courtier, conversant with all the tortuous byeways of Moghul politics, trained to silence and reserve and somewhat of a cynic. He wears a flowered coat over his violet tunic, the details of which are painted with all the glowing, if somewhat hard tones of the Moghul palette. In front is a tray of apples, an offering to the venerable figure lost in a world of thoughts, peculiarly his own. Against the artificial pomp and splendour of the noble visitors is delineated the true nobility of mind and intellect, reflected in the contrasted figures of the aged ascetic and the youthful anchorite. What depths of subtlety are hidden in the drooping face of the saint with eyes half-closed, and its wealth of silver hair! The younger man, possibly a disciple, is clad in the robes of a Hindu *Sanyāsi* and surveys the scene with eyes of clear vision and a posture of absolute composure. The clean-shaven head bears obvious marks of deep intellectuality. The psychological interest of the figures holds the attention of the spectator and all else sinks into insignificance. Moghul princes were fond of visiting holy men and their abodes and the meeting place here is a peaceful retreat under the shadow of a tree worked out minutely and with great delicacy.

On the reverse is a seal which reads 'Haji Mohammad

Karbalai' 1212 Hijri. A good many pictures in the magnificent collection of Bābu Sitā Rām Sāhu of Benares bear the seal of this gentleman, who appears to have been one of the descendants of the fugitive prince Jahāndār Shāh, who sought refuge at Benares at the end of the 18th century. The pictures passed into the possession of the family of Bābu Sitā Rām Sāhu about the beginning of the 19th century.

PLATE NO. 42.

Bhartrihari's meeting with his wife.

BHARTRIHARI MEETING HIS WIFE
(Plate Nos. 41-42)

The name of Rājā Bhartrihari is most often heard throughout Hindustan, where beggar-minstrels sing their wistful melodies with the ever recurring refrain about the impermanence of everything, that is. Whether the Raja is the same as the accomplished writer, grammarian and philosopher, who lived in the first half of the 7th century and best known for his three 'Centuries' of Love, Peace and Renunciation, is a matter of only historical or antiquarian interest. For students of art and poetry it is the romance of his love and the drama of his renunciation, that have furnished themes of eternal interest. The author of the 'Century of Love' says: What is the good of unreasoning talk? Two things alone are worth having by men—either the rest of a forest-home or the enjoyment of a woman's youth with her swelling breasts and slothful gait (verse 39). Tradition says that the gay poet was metamorphosed into a monk by the inconstancy of his beloved wife—Pingalā. The subject-matter of plates Nos. 41 and 42 is Bhartrihari's coming to beg alms from his erstwhile lady-love. There can be no doubt that both the pictures are by the same hand, for inspite of obvious differences there is a close resemblance and identity of treatment as regards figures, landscape, colouring and even the details of draperies. The version in plate No. 42 is better, more poetic and adequate than the more elaborate painting reproduced in the coloured plate.

The scene is laid on the banks of a broad stream where Gopichand—the name assumed by Bhartrihari as an ascetic, meets his penitent wife. The contrast between the life that was, and its present loneliness is poignantly indicated by a pair of deer and couples of birds gaily disporting themselves amidst a pleasant landscape. In the other picture Bhartrihari is accompanied by a number of wandering friars, as is Pingalā by half-a-dozen of her attendants. The stream is clumsily put in front and the note of sadness—the touch of poetry added by the

presence of birds and animals is absent. On the reverse is a verse in Persian which says : "The lady with the eyes of a fawn has captured my heart as her quarry and has robbed me of peace and comfort of my mind. Friends ! your advice proved of no avail." There is also a seal on both the pictures which reads: Haji Mohammad Karbalai 1211 and 1212 Hijri respectively.

Though the technique leaves nothing to be desired, there is lacking a sense of conviction—of passionate sincerity which Moghul painters seldom caught even in their finest delineations of popular, poetic or semi-religious subjects.

Plate No. 41

Bhartrihari's meeting with his wife.

PLATE NO. 43.

A Moghul warrior.

A MOGHUL WARRIOR

(Plate No. 43)

This spirited portrait has the word ' Mirza ' inscribed on it, and is probably a representation of a Persian in the service of the Moghul sovereign—probably Shāh Jahān. The brushwork on the profile is exceptionally fine and the treatment of the hands and feet full of nervous feeling. The face is manly and full of character. The young Mirza is just stepping out with a brandished sword held in the right hand, which is gloved.

SULTAN BAYEZID AS PRISONER
(Plate No. 44)

This gorgeously painted drawing—rather jewel-like in its glittering hardness of tones illustrates a tragic episode in the history of the house of Othman. The Turkish Emperor Bayezid I (1389-1403), who was captured at the battle of Angora in 1402, is ushered in the presence of Shāh Taimur. Born in 1333 and a descendant through his mother of the great Mongol Changez Khān, Taimur began life as a petty tribal chieftain in the neighbourhood of Samarkand. His ambition was that, 'as there was only one God in Heaven, so there should be only one ruler on earth' and that was to be himself. By the time he was seventy, his empire extended from the Great Wall of China to the frontier of Asia Minor and from the sea of Aral to the Ganges and the Persian Gulf. 27 separate states and 9 dynasties had been extinguished in the process. In 1402 the Tartar conqueror came into conflict with the only other growing military power then existing in the world, namely the Ottoman Empire. Bayezid, ruthless, intrepid and vicious like other princes of his House, had passed during his short reign of fourteen years from one victory to another, till he was overwhelmed and captured at Angora. Taimur Shah impressed by the noble and dignified bearing of his vanquished enemy treated him for some time after his capture with unusual generosity. But the treatment became more cruel and intolerable after a vain attempt to escape. Bayezid's wife, Despina, a Servian princess, was compelled to wait on Taimur at his meals and serve him with drink in a state of nudity and the Tartar conqueror is said to have made a foot-stool of his conquered foe. Bayezid died of a broken heart at the age of 48 after suffering unparalleled humiliation. (See Everseley's Turkish Empire (1923) Chapter IV.)

The picture depicts Taimur seated on a golden chair, looking at the royal captive with an expression of mingled sarcasm and contempt. Among the stalwart helmetted officers

Plate No. 44
Sultan Bayezid as Prisoner before Taimur Shāh.

of Taimur's army is to be found also a swarthy Ethiopian. The smart assemblage of men here depicted is of more than mere pictorial interest, for it conveys a vivid picture of the type of officers who under their great chief overran the major portion of Asia and helped Taimur to carve out a mighty empire.

On the reverse is an illuminated panel in Turki from the pen of the famous calligrapher Mulla Mir Ali of Herat (died 1544 A.D.).

A similar picture slightly inferior in technique and later in age is reproduced in plate 111 of Kühnel's book "Miniaturmalerei im Islamischen Orient"; wherein the figure of the Ethiopian is absent and the vast hordes of Taimur are shown in the background. In both the pictures an officer on Taimur's right holds an arrow which may have something to do with some historical episode which I am unable exactly to ascertain. There can be no doubt that the various faces—in all 33 in our picture—are actual likenesses taken from some older version.

SHĀH HASAN

(Plate No. 45)

The Shāh, standing on a garden terrace in rather an unconventional attitude with the sword on the right shoulder, is presenting a necklace to a handsome youth. His attendants wearing ear-rings are all strikingly handsome, one of whom is carrying a quiver of arrows, another a fly-whisk of peacock feathers and a third probably a carpet. There is considerable charm of colour and decorative effect in the picture.

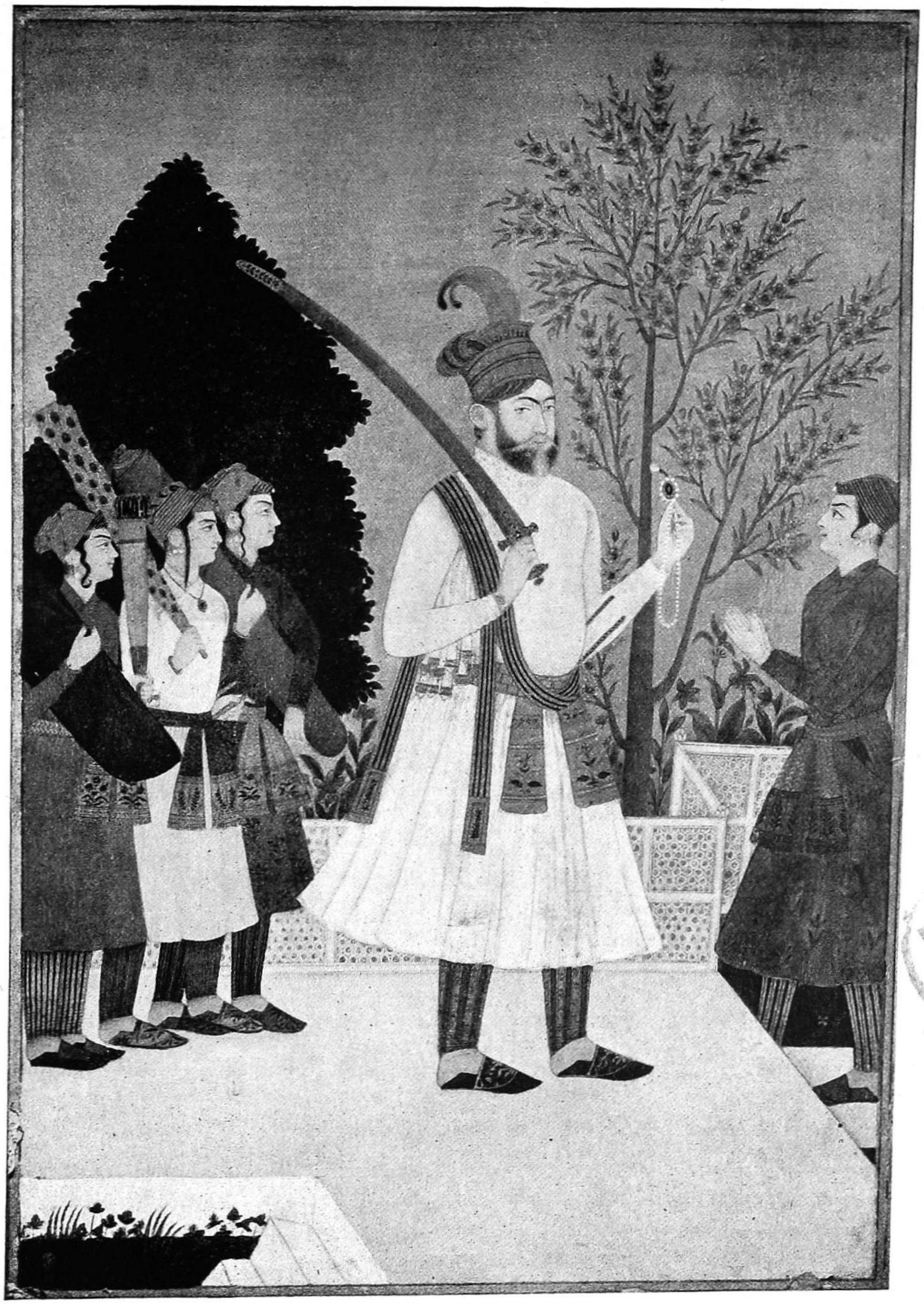


PLATE NO. 45.

Shah Hasan and his attendants.

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Plate No. 46.

A Love Scene by Mehrchand.

A LOVE-SCENE BY MEHRCHAND

(Plate No. 46)

The picture is signed as having been painted by "the son of Gangā Rām," who, as we now know, was the artist Mehrchand whose works were first discovered by Dr. Ernest Kühnel. The latter has reproduced in his work on 'Miniature Painting in the Islamic Orient,' three pictures depicting such diverse subjects as Vishnu on Garuda, a prince going out probably for hunting and rather a pleasant scene of a game of polo: (plates 133, 105 and 112). Two portraits by the same artist have been reproduced in Rupam No. 17, page 54.

The present picture shows the court art of the Moghuls in the final stage of its dissolution. European influence is unmistakable in the meaningless presentation of the angels at the top and above all in the excessive amount of shading which produces a feeling of weariness in looking at the scene of voluptuous pleasure. There is none of the firmness or refinement or even delicate sensuousness which characterised Moghul painting in its days of glory. Between the 'Study of a Woman' by Govardhan (see plate 36) and this effiminate picture by Mehrchand we have traversed a space of a century and a half, at the end of which the empire and the art of the Moghuls were overwhelmed by the decree of Fate.

The picture bears the seal of Khān Bahādur Asad-ud-daulah 1211 Hijri, recording an incident in the history of the ownership of the picture.

A STUDY OF AN ELEPHANT

(Plate No. 47)

The picture reproduced here is unsurpassed as a piece of elephant portraiture. The inscription '*Amal Dakkan-niyān*' means that it was possibly painted by a Deccani painter; and if so, it is certainly the finest example of that offshoot of Moghul painting, yet known. The picture is finished in every detail and the vigour of its draftsmanship is only matched by the exceptional quality of its glowing tints. Though the landscape is conventional, it is elaborately worked out with genuine taste and great accomplishment. The man below is offering stalks of sugar-cane to the mighty brute, who is conscious, at it were, of its importance and the splendour of its sumptuous trappings. The head of the animal is drawn with real power and one almost gets the impression of the majesty of the Lost Dominion in his slow and measured tread.

Plate No. 47
Study of an Elephant.

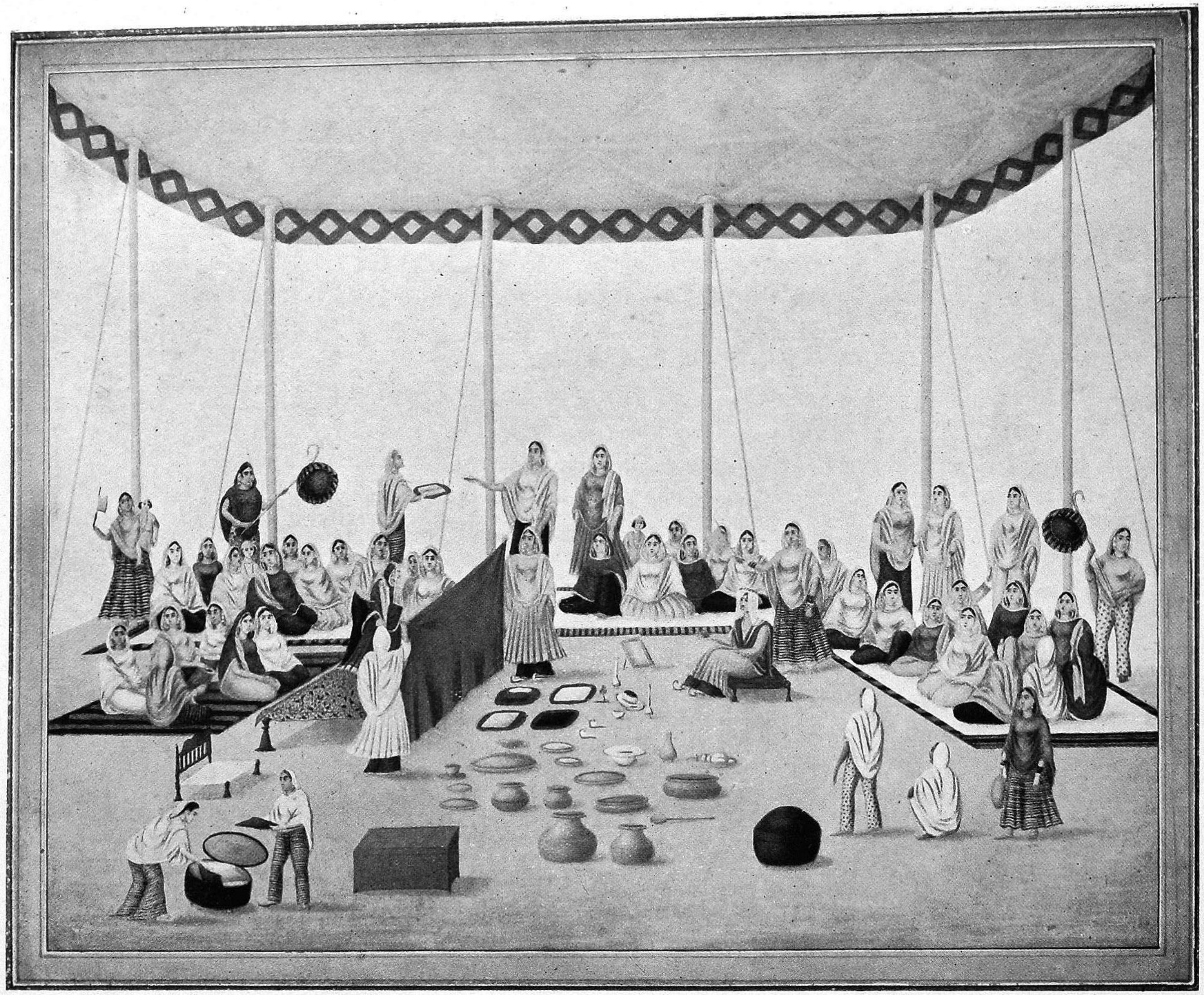

PLATE NO. 48.
Muslim Wedding by Shivalal.

A MUSLIM WEDDING BY SHIVALAL

(Plate No. 48)

This picture was executed about the middle of the 19th century by Shivalal, maternal grand-uncle of Professor Ishwari Prasad of the Calcutta School of Art. It may be said to be almost the last product of a School of art, which was rapidly dissolving with the influx of foreign influences. I am told by Mr. P. C. Manuk, who is the fortunate owner of one of the finest collections of Indian painting in this country, that there was but one family of painters, the members of which worked for two families of Patna—one of Rai Sultan Bahadur and another whose name he could not recollect. The last representative of this school (Circa 1840-90 A.D.) died towards the last quarter of the 19th century.

The subject of the picture is the meeting of the bride and the bride-groom under a tent—*Shāmiānā*, pitched possibly in the women's quarters or the zenānā. A red curtain held by two women separates the bride and the bride-groom. The latter is seated on a small stool while the bride is just getting up the couch to have a look at her future husband. The picture is remarkable for its flawless composition and exceptionally delicate colouring. The drawing is somewhat weak and reflects the obvious influences of European painting in the amount of careful shading and meticulous spacing. The red and to a minor extent yellow are the dominant colours in the picture. There are hardly any specimens representative of the Patna school, which have the quality of our picture.

NOTES ON PLATES

HINDU (RAJPUT) SCHOOL

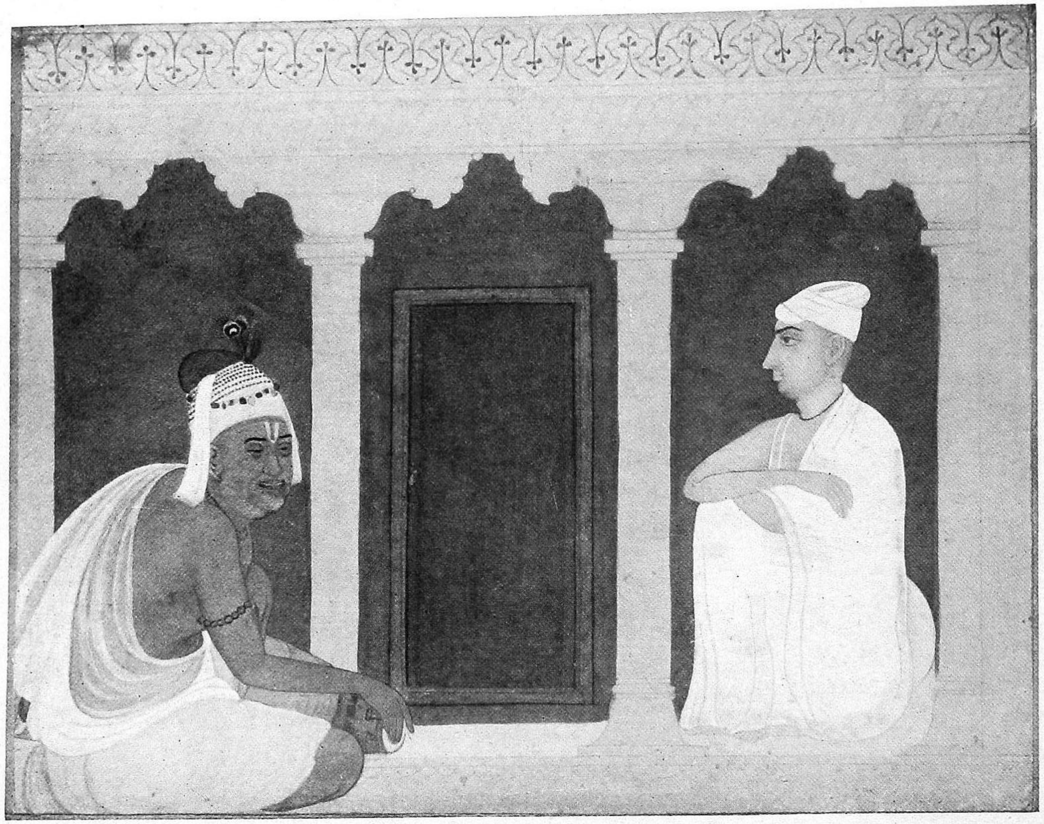

PLATE NO. 49.

Bābā Malūka Das and his nephew Rāma Snehi.

NOTES ON PLATES

HINDU (RAJPUT) SCHOOL

MALUKADĀS AND HIS DISCIPLE

(Plate No. 49)

THIS picture is of more than ordinary interest because firstly it can be dated with greater precision than is ordinarily the case and secondly because it represents a historic personage of considerable influence during the time of Aurangzeb. Baba Malukadāsa was the founder of an eclectic sect, which still flourishes in various parts of India. The principal seat is at Kadā-on-the-Ganges in the district of Allahabad, where his descendants eke out a precarious existence as petty cultivators and petition-writers. Malukadāsa, like his prototype Kabir, is reputed to be the author of several poetical works, most of which are still in manuscript in the possession of his almost illiterate and unappreciative descendants. A short selection of his Hindi poems has been published.

Malukadāsa who is shown in the picture as listening to the devotional songs of his pupil, nephew and successor, Ramasnehi Dāsa was born of Khatri parents at Kadā on Baisakh Badi 5, Samvat 1631 (=1574 A.D.). According to the manuscript biography written in A.D. 1831 by Suthrādās an adherent of the sect, Malukadāsa died at the age of 108 in Samvat 1739 (=1682 A.D.). It is said that Malukadāsa had long hands reaching below the knees, regarded by the Indians as the sign of a *Mahāpurusha*—one who is destined to attain greatness. Various miracles are said to have been performed by Malukadāsa, who certainly seems to have deeply impressed his contemporaries ; for it is an undoubted fact borne out by the original orders of the Emperor Aurangzeb still in existence,

that the hated tax of *Jazia* levied from all Hindus in the realm was remitted in Kadā—the birth-place of the saint. The fact is mentioned also in the biography by Suthrādāsa. Malukā's poetry is of the same style and couched in the same simple and direct language as the verses of Kabira, and has the worship of one God as its principal refrain. A good number of his couplets has passed into the common currency of popular Hinduism and may be heard recited by ordinary folk in everyday parlance throughout Northern India.

There are several pictures portraying this remarkable man, the best of which is reproduced here. There can be little doubt that we have here a true likeness of Malukadāsa and his swarthy disciple Rāmasnehi. The latter has been painted with genuine feeling and one can well imagine this devout and deeply religious man modestly refusing to undertake the responsibilities of his uncle on the latter's retirement on the score of his own unworthiness and incapacity. He would be more in his element, singing his rhapsodies to the accompaniment of the drum in praise of the Creator than as the responsible head of a religious fraternity. Malukadāsa himself seems to have been a man of fair complexion, somewhat stout, tall, long-armed and of an imposing stature. The quiet scene portrayed here with so much charm and sincerity would appear to have been enacted in the verandah of his modest house at Kadā—where Malukadāsa's adherents still meet once a year to do honour to his *gaddi* and pay homage to the sandals and other traces of the departed saint.

The picture must have been painted about the commencement of the 17th century and is an interesting example of an art which cannot be put into any of the contrasted categories of Moghul and Rajput painting.

There are several other pictures similar in style and of the same period still in the possession of Malukadāsa's descendants, which must have been painted by artists working for the general public rather than for the courts of princes and noblemen.

PLATE No. 50.
Krishna's Flute.

KRISHNA'S FLUTE

(Plate No. 50)

Krishna is seen playing on his flute with his two consorts on either side of him. The entire world of nature—animate and inanimate has gathered to listen to the soul entrancing melodies of the Divine cow-herd. Even the denizens of water have left their abode and their mutual antipathies, to witness the unique experience. The trees in the background too, are bending in devotion with their gifts of loaded fruit and flower.

In a picture of this sort the only thing which counts, is the expression of the idea. All else is of secondary importance. The treatment of the figures and the landscape though purely conventional, fit in with the dominant note of complete devotion which the Hindu painter like the primitive school of Italian painters sought to express.

SHIKAR BY NIGHT BY BICHITAR

(Plate No. 51)

One more name is to be added to the short list of 'Rajput' painters. Though the inscription on the picture is in a later hand, it is extremely probable that the name of the painter is correctly given; for I found the same name (Bichitar) inscribed on another painting depicting a couple of blue-bulls or *Neelgais.* A good many versions of *Shikār* by night have been known especially of the Moghul school, in which the *shikaris* are generally men of high birth. Here is a specimen of the mixed style, in which the hunter is a common Hindu accompanied by a woman of the gipsy tribe. The stag is already mortally wounded and the two does are startled at the sudden disturbance of their peaceful retreat on the grassy banks of the quiet pool of water. A pair of deer is still resting unaware of the tragedy that has taken place. The scene is laid in a thickly wooded grove of mango trees; from the rear of which the hunter's dart has done its murderous work. The gipsy woman is holding in her left hand a torch with a metal reflector and a bell in the right hand. She is wearing a short skirt of leaves and a pair of embroidered slippers. The upper portion of the body is completely bare with the exception of a long scarf thrown across the shoulders. While there is the greatest possible economy of dress, there is an abundance of ornaments round the wrist, the neck, the nose, the ears, the forehead and the feet. The hunter wears the dress of a common Hindu with just a dhoti wound round the lower portion of the body. He has a sword, a short dagger and a bunch of arrows thrust on the right of his waist. The landscape, though conventional, reflects the sombre atmosphere of the night and the treatment of the trees and above all of the harmless animals resting by the side of the brook is altogether admirable.

At the top of the picture is a Persian verse—an

PLATE NO. 51.

Shikar by night by Bichitar.

address to the Beloved, which is thus translated:—

> 'No quarry did have a moment's rest when thy beauty's bow-string was plucked.'

On the reverse is a somewhat indifferent drawing which is entitled Shāh Abbās Safavi.

A RAJPUT WOMAN

(Plate No. 52)

This charming study is a mixture of reality and ideal type—of imagination and observation, as a Hindu painting generally is, in contradistinction to the secular court-art of the Moghuls. There is a little more modelling than is usual in such pictures. Rajput painters painted their women with invariable charm and genuine nobility of feeling. The women are almost always young and beautiful, modest, emotional and tender as a flower. The beauty of their limbs and their sensuousness are discreetly veiled in lovely draperies and glorified by the single-mindedness of motherly love or the devotion of a loving wife.

PLATE No. 52.
A Rajput woman.

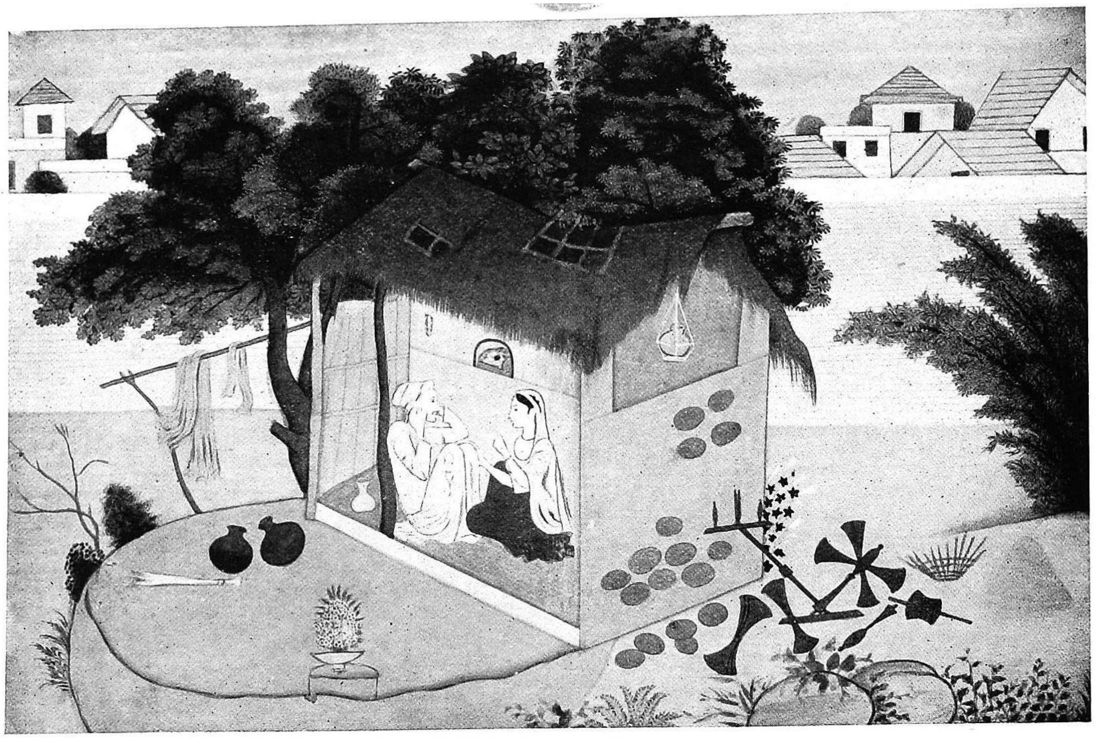

PLATE NO. 53.
Sudāmā's Hut.

SUDĀMĀ'S HUT

(Plate No. 53)

The poor Brāhman, friend and school-fellow of Krishna, is urged by his wife to seek the help of the opulent Lord of Dwarka as a last resort to save himself and the family from starvation; for the spinning-wheel is broken, the thatched roof has given way and the waterpots are lying empty and uncared for in company with the broom. The husband and the wife are in tatters. In a corner of the wall is hung the rosary and in the centre is carefully put the throne of worship, whereon is seen the Shālagrām—the emblem of Vishnu the protector, amongst the offerings of flowers. The irate lady is pointing the warning finger as to the future, which ultimately wins over the gentle Sudāmā to her side, who is at first shocked by her humiliating proposal. The *tulsi* plant, characteristic of the Hindu household is seen in the foreground. While the whole scene is realistically worked out in considerable detail, it is the underlying poetry and the ring of absolute sincerity, which raised the Hindu art to the level of a great tradition enabling it to reflect the varied hues of racial consciousness and common idealism.*

* The reproduction is altogether unsatisfactory; but it is the best I could obtain.

WORSHIPPING THE BULL

(Plate No. 54)

Pictures of this kind are indiscriminately classed as belonging to the Kāngrā school, though a good many of them found in well-known private collections outside the Punjab are probably the productions of Garhwali artists or their pupils. It will be perhaps better to call them *Pahāri* drawings and treat them merely as a species of Hindu painting.

Here one has the difference vividly and tersely summarised between Hindu and Moghul painting. In the spirited rendering of the bull there is something more than mere craftsmanship or accuracy of observation, which is not to be found even in the great animal portraits by well known masters like Manohar, Murād and Mansur. The powerful brute has lost his *furore animale* and seems completely subdued by the affectionate stroking on the head by the lady in the balcony. The picture at once suggests the note of mutual sympathy and even friendship, which is so naturally, albeit with great subtlety and skill, struck by the artist. The quiet back-ground is in harmony with the prevailing key of amity and peace.

PLATE NO. 54.

Worshipping the Bull.

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PLATE NO. 55.
Glory of Spring.

THE GLORY OF SPRING

(Plate No. 55)

This picture was presented to the Bhārat Kalā Parishad by Kunwar Bichitra Shāh, a scion of the royal house of Tehri and is probably the handi-work of one of the court-painters of Raja Sudarshan Shāh. It is a charming study of a woman seated on the bank of a hilly stream flowing past the palace-gardens. The young lady is dressed in ample robes of yellow, for saffron according to the Hindus is the colour of Spring. The vernal blossoms of convention are delicately painted, with the architectural background worked out somewhat realistically. On the reverse is a quatrain from a celebrated Hindu poet by the name of Senāpati describing the advent of spring with characteristic imagery.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DURGĀ-PĀṬHA
(Plates Nos. 56-57)

The Durgā-Pāṭha is a part of the Mārkandeya Purāna just as the Bhagawad-gītā is of the Mahābhārata; and deals with the exploits of the Goddess Chandi, who emanated as the spirit of light from Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva and the minor deities of the Olympus. The Bhārat Kalā Parishad possesses a series of 58 paintings executed in 1848 A.D. for the ruling prince of Mandi—probably Raja Balvir Singh, who gave it to his Guru at Benares. The pictures are good examples of the Kāngrā school of painting in its final stages of decadence and death. While a good number of the pictures are marred by scenes of violence treated with crude realism, there are not a few which are distinguished by considerable felicity of draughtsmanship and capacity for vivid narrative. There is never any attempt at mere decoration or outward elegance. The sole object is to tell the story vividly and effectively.

The story runs that there was a king by the name of Suratha of the line of Chaitra, who was driven away from his kingdom by powerful enemies and treacherous friends and who rode alone on horse-back to a dense jungle, knowing not what to do. There he met a Vaishya by the name of Samādhi, who had been robbed by greedy sons and selfish wife. Both Suratha and Samādhi sought the hermitage of the saint Medhas for the solution of their troubles and the attainment of mental peace.

The picture of the 'Hermitage' depicts the quiet retreat of the anchorite with the unhappy king and the forsaken Vaishya. Hindus have always looked to these peaceful abodes of ascetics with feelings of love and reverence; where men of every status meet the hermit in a posture of humility, and where even animal anthipathies fuse in a concord of peace and harmony. The hermit is seated on a buck-skin in an attitude of teaching. The left hand is raised in a significant gesture, often met with in plastic representations of the Lord Buddha and known as *Dharma-chakra-Mudrā*. The hermitage occupies the saddle

Plate No. 56.

The Hermitage (Durgā-Pātha.)

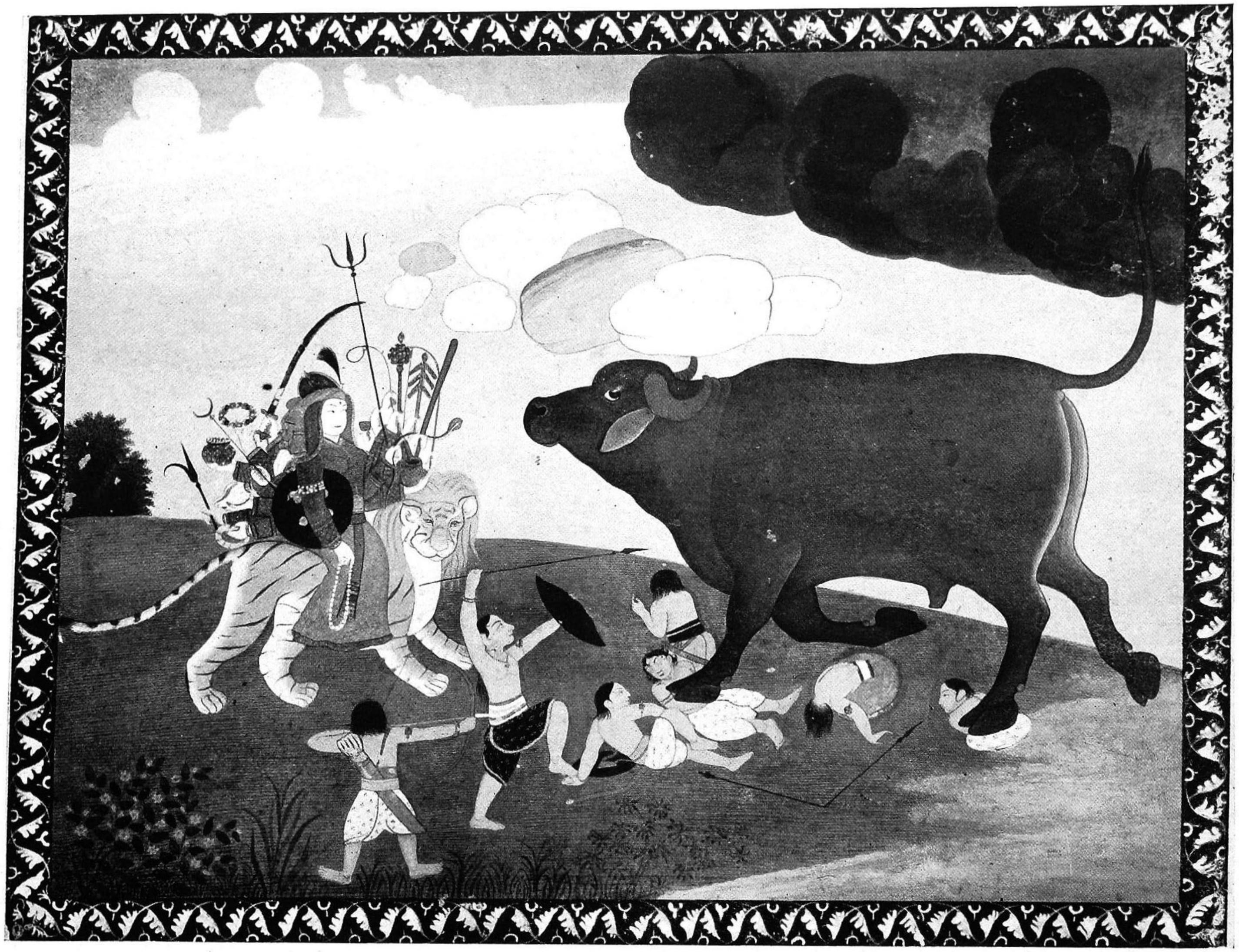

PLATE No. 57.

An illustration from Durgā-Pāṭha.

of a promontory and is situated on the edge of a mango grove. The landscape is in accordance with the atmosphere of peace and repose, so beloved of the philosophic Hindu.

The other picture (plate No. 57) represents the encounter between the radiant Goddess—Mahāshakti and the evil spirit incarnated as the giant-buffalo (*Mahishāsura*). The Goddess is mounted on a lion and holds a variety of weapons in her sixteen arms. The drawing is rather indifferent and the treatment of the Goddess altogether inadequate. Against this however is the very animated figure of the Buffalo, cleverly drawn, with vigour and real knowledge of animal life. The subject-matter of the picture is a favourite motif of medieval sculpture.

The Tehri Darbar has another illustrated version of Durgā-Pāṭha, which appears to have been contemporary with the pictures reproduced here. The Tehri pictures are somewhat smaller—9 inches by 6 inches, but hardly inferior to the Mandi series. Mr. Ajit Ghose of Calcutta exhibited some Durgā-Pāṭha pictures at the second Lucknow Art Exhibition which are bigger in size and somewhat earlier in age but aesthetically inferior to the Mandi and the Tehri series. They are said to come from Basholi in the Punjab and were wrongly described as depicting scenes from the Rāmāyana.

A STORM

(Plate No. 58)

The lyrical mood of the *Pahāri* painters is best reflected in pictures like this. No label or commentary is required to elucidate the *mis-en-scène*, for the animated lines convey their meaning vividly, effectively and unambiguously. The flying draperies have caught the wind exposing the long black hair of the woman who is running back to her apartments to escape the storm. The Lucknow School of Art and Crafts has recently acquired a slightly more finished version of our picture, in which the gloom of the horizon is relieved by golden streaks of lightning and the curtain on the door is being tossed up and down by the blowing wind.

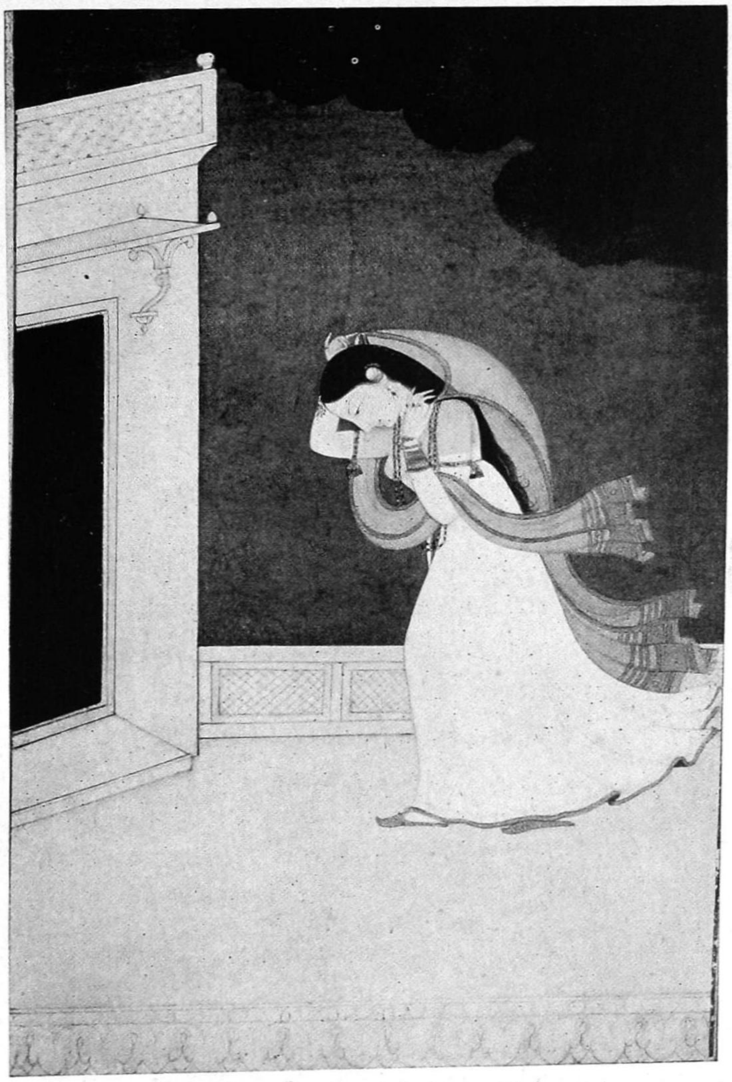

PLATE NO. 58.

In a storm.

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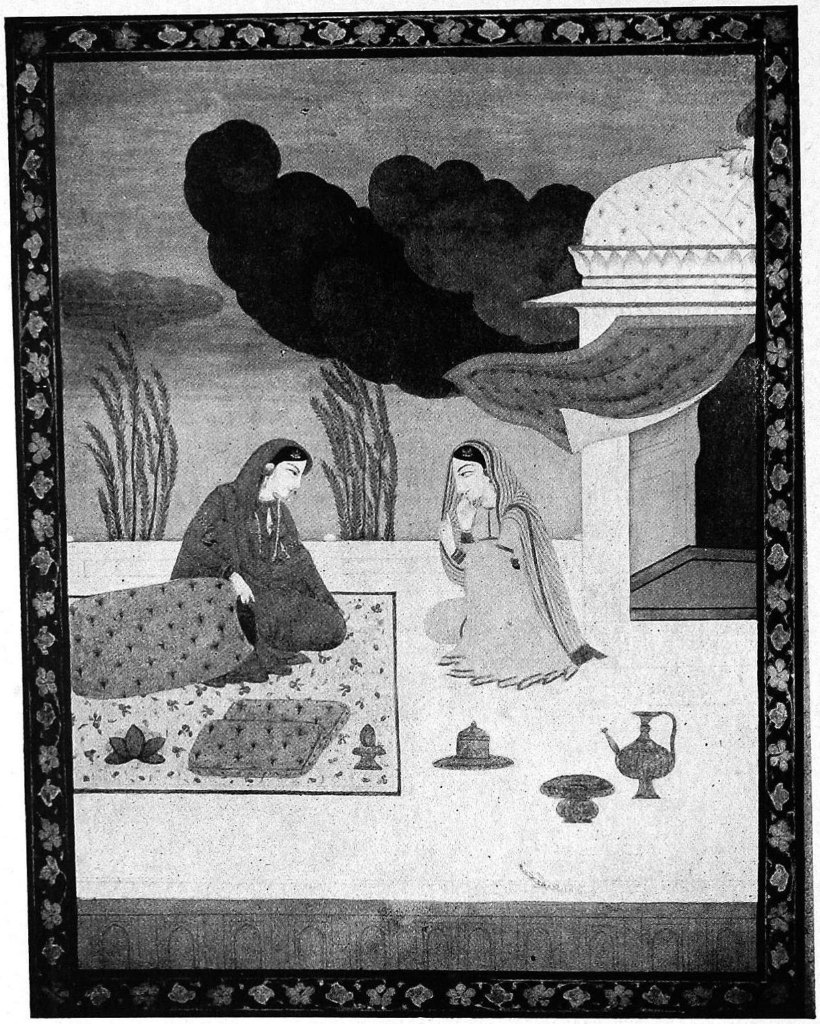

PLATE No. 59.

A Cloudy Day.

(Rāgini Gandhāri of Rāga Mālakosha.)

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A NOTE ON THE RĀGINI PICTURES

(PLATES Nos. 59 AND 60)

IT is at present impossible to say exactly how or when the conception of graphic representation of musical modes came into being. What is certain, however, is that the idea was unknown to the poets and the painters of the 15th century and also to Shārngadeva, who wrote his standard work on Indian music—*Sangīta Ratnākara* at the court of the Yādava King Singhaṇa of Devagiri in the early fifties of the 14th century. It is, therefore, probable that the Rāgini pictures first came into vogue some time in the 16th century after the advent of the Moghuls; when the entire fabric of the common life of the people was undergoing a subtle transformation which found expression in the propagation of the cult of *Bhakti*, broad-casted through the exalted verse of the Vaishnavite poets, and the inspired word of Chaitanya. It is a fact of some importance that the Rāgini pictures invariably bear their descriptive inscriptions (if there are any) in Hindi and not in Sanskrit; for unlike the Gupta renaissance the 16th century revival was democratic in its nature and universal in its appeal. It is also interesting to note that there are Hindu as well as Moghul versions of Rāgini and Bāramāsi (seasonal) pictures; which can be easily distinguished by their characteristic differences of style and treatment. Some of the Moghul melody-pictures have Persian inscriptions. A good Rajput Rāgini picture has more of temperament and imaginative feeling, while the Moghul version is generally perfect as regards the splendour of its stage effects. The Rampur State Library has an excellent series of Rāga Mālā pictures in the Moghul style of the late 18th or the early 19th century. Most of the Rāga Mālās belong generally to

the 17th and the 18th century and there are not many pictures which can be confidently assigned to an earlier period.

There can be no doubt that the development of the Hindi literature during the Moghul period is closely and organically connected with the evolution of Hindu painting as exemplified in the pictures illustrating the various *rasa* (sentiments), the different kinds of heroes (*nāyaka*) and heroines (*nāyikā*), the seasons of the year and the modes of music. In fact the poets not infrequently furnished the imaginative frame-work which was elaborated by the artists into glowing pictures of concrete images and appropriate atmosphere. This is especially true of the pictures of *rasa, ritu* (seasons) and of *nāyaka—nāyikā-bheda* (heroes and heroines). It was always the painter who copied and translated the poet's ideas; and it is because of this that the verses of Jayadeva, Bihāri, Keshava and Matirām and the episodes of the Shrimad Bhāgawata form the principal repertory of Hindu painting. This practice of depending upon the poet for ideas and imagery was fully in consonance with ancient traditions; for the philosopher in this country invariably furnished the intellectual foundation and set the rules, on and within which the artist was free to expand himself. It is therefore easy to understand why the evolution of Hindi literature and Hindu painting should have proceded *pari passu.*

It should further be noted that plastic representation of musical modes is unknown in Indian art, though early sculptures delineating *navagraha* (nine planets), *ritu* (seasons), *rasa* (emotions) and even the daily periods—morn, noon and eventide have been known and some of them are even common.* This total absence of any plastic interpretation of musical notes or melodies would seem to confirm the hypothesis about the later origin of the Rāgini pictures.

The Rāga Mālās generally consist of 36 pictorial representations of various musical modes which are to be sung at specific intervals of day and night, if they are to produce their

* See Ojha's History of Rajputana in Hindi, Vol. I, page 27 (1925).

appropriate atmosphere and emotional background. These prescriptions regarding time, though generally observed in practice, are not easily understood and do not always appear to have any real or logical basis. Moghul versions of the Rāga Mālās are generally without inscriptions, as is also the case with some Rajput pictures (see plate No. 59 Rāgini Gandhāri). Most of the Hindu versions have Hindi verses, which are often excellent and really helpful summaries of the pictures, which they describe. But it is not always easy to ascertain the authorship or even the precise meaning of these verses. They usually vary with the different series of Rāga-Mālā pictures. Even the pictorial treatment of the various modes varies in different Rāga-Mālās. In fact the imaginative impulse which was responsible for transmuting the abstract notes of music into concrete images and performing a veritable *tour de force* of pictorial interpretation, seems to have been early lost in a maze of conventional and not infrequently bizarre and unmeaning formulae. It would also appear that the evolution of Rāgini pictures was gradual. Some of the pictures such as of Rāgini Todi, Āsāwari, Gandhāri, and others are on a par with beautiful lyrics; while others do not rise to the same imaginative levels and are nothing more than crude representations of literary prescriptions.

Most of the larger collections in this country possess Rāgamālā pictures most of which must however be pronounced aesthetically of little value. The palace libraries of Datia and Benares for instance have got a considerable number of melody-pictures, none of which however attains the excellence of the Pahāri pictures reproduced in plates Nos. 59 and 60. These truly poetical versions of musical modes do not bear any descriptive verses at all. In plate No. 59 rather an unsatisfactory reproduction, is depicted the picture of Rāgini Gandhāri of Rāga Mālkosh, a veritable lyric of line and colour, rich in setting and suggestiveness. The plants have not received the welcome showers and the two women have come out in the

balcony to enjoy the welcome breeze heralding the onset of the rainy weather. The curtain is flying and the moisture-laden clouds seem on the verge of precipitation.

In plate No. 60 is the picture of Rāgini Vasanta of Rāga Hindol, depicting Krishna dancing to the accompaniment of Rādhā's drum. An attendant is keeping time with cymbals. The scene is laid on the banks of the Jamunā and the figures are portrayed against a background of gold. The picture is quivering with life, as only a great piece of poetry could be. As a study of rhythmic motion and spontaneous gesture, the picture of Rāga Vasanta is a characteristic and almost perfect example of Pahāri painting. It is only in melody-pictures like these that the subtlety of music is happily combined with the palpitating tints and the direct expressiveness of graphic art. It is a curious fact however that the Pahāri portraiture of men is incomparably feeble when contrasted with similar presentations of the feminine sex. Krishna, for instance, delineated in countless pictures of Hindu painters is seldom up to the standard of the intensity of love and devotion with which He was contemplated and adored. Throughout the entire range of Rājput or Hindu portraiture of the medieval age there hardly emerges a glorious form of Man or his apotheosis, comparable for instance to the immortal figure of Avalokiteshavara holding the blue lotus, adorning the walls of the Ājantā caves. On the other hand the feminine creations of Pahāri painters leave but little to be desired by way of graceful, tender and sweet representations of womanhood.

PLATE NO. 60.

Rāgini Vasanta.

GOVE... 7 MAR 1944

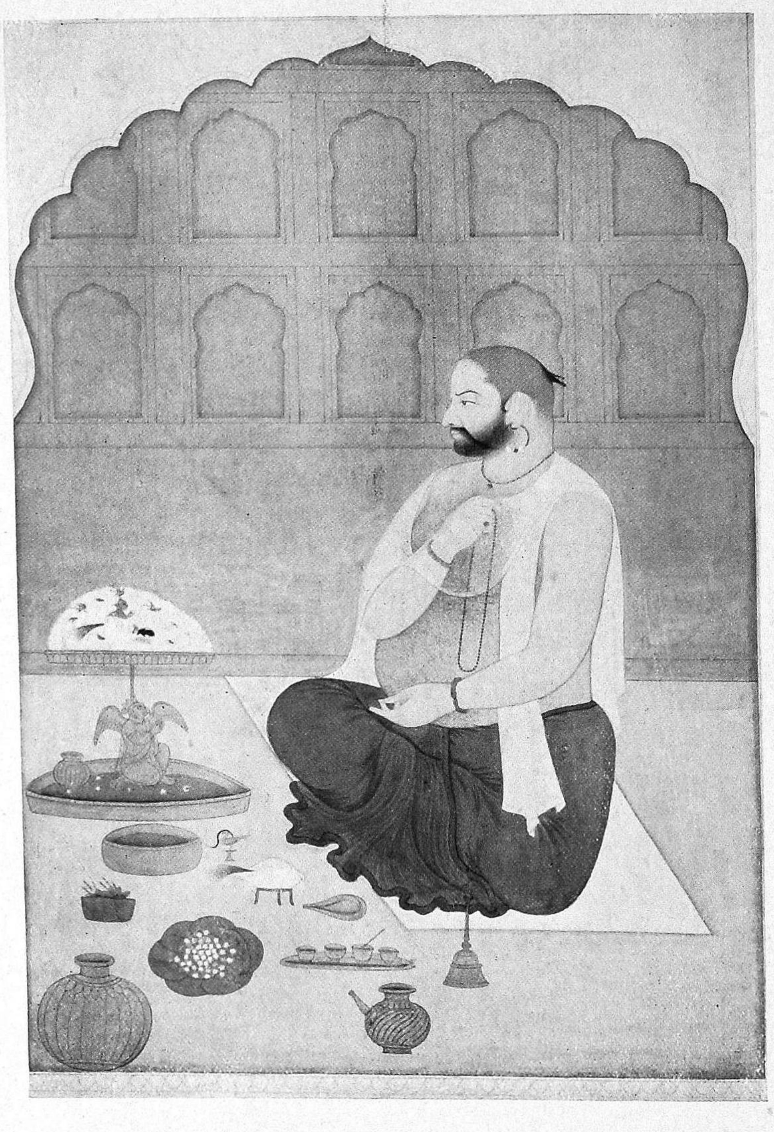

PLATE No. 61.
Morning Worship.

MORNING WORSHIP

(Plate No. 61)

This is rather a good portrait of the Benares School depicting a Brahman engaged in his morning worship. The symbolic stone of *Shālagrāma* is seen in a circular plate borne by the half-eagle and half-human form of Garuda—the favourite vehicle of Vishnu. There is another version of the same subject—an unfinished pencil study dated Saturday '*Mahā Vade IV Samvat 1917*=1860 A.D. in the collection of the Bhārat Kalā Parishad, which is also the probable date of the picture reproduced here. European influence is obvious in the elaborate perfection of detail and the painfully evident attempt at securing a physical likeness. Of psychological interest there is nothing.

There must have been quite a flourishing school of painters in Benares whose works are more of historical than of aesthetic value. Their *chef-d'oeuvre* is the illustrated *Rāma-Charita-Mānasa* or Tulsi's Rāmāyana bound in eight stout volumes, which are the valued treasures of His Highness the Mahārājā of Benares. There are scores of illustrations in these heavily illuminated tomes, which as paintings are crude in execution, weak in composition and totally lacking in taste and imagination. In fact they are more reminiscent of the modern style of Indian illustrations of the Ravivarma school than of the pictorial art in the earlier years of the 19th century. The Benares Rāmāyana was executed in Samvat 1889=1822 A.D. during the time of Raja Udit Nārāyan Singh of Rāmnagar. The illustrated Rāmāyana in the collection of the Bhārat Kalā Parishad—also the work of the Benares artists, is probably contemporary in age but artistically of greater value. European influences seem to have early affected the Benares school and hence the relative aesthetic poverty of its productions, especially in comparison to the charming pictures of the Pahāri artists and the racy illustrations of the Bundela painters.

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